MARGARET'S INFLUENCE

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Margaret's Influence

A Secret of the Confessional

BY

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ST. LOUIS, MO., & FREIBURG (BADEN)
PUBLISHED BY B. HERDER
1910

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ST. LOUIS, MO.

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FOREWORD.

"MARGARET'S INFLUENCE: A Secret of the Confessional" is a story embodying the doctrine imparted in the State instruction or special lecture, which the Redemptorist Fathers address to the young people on Catholic missions. The narrative is founded on facts. For obvious reasons, however, the scenes are fictitious. The story depicts the conversion of a young man from the rankest materialism to the true Faith, through the influence of a Catholic young woman.

The reader may be surprised, at first, at the ignorance as well as at the principles and acts of Webster Van Deever. He may be disappointed at a certain weakness in the conduct of Margaret Redmond. But let it be borne in mind that these characters are taken from real life, where, with the exception of Jesus and Mary, no one has attained the perfection of the divine ideal in all details, and some, like Webster Van Deever, have never heard it mentioned favorably.

THE AUTHOR.

MARGARET'S INFLUENCE

CHAPTER I

AN OPEN CONFESSION

"PARDON me — are you not a Catholic priest?"

It was a cold morning in January, 1902, and I was seated quietly in a Pullman coach, reading my breviary. I had spent some time on the Standing Rock Reservation, where the zealous sons and daughters of St. Benedict have established several flourishing parishes among the Sioux tribes. Before dawn, on the preceding day, I had left Fort Yates for the north, on the primitive stage which connects that sleepy town with the outside world. After a tedious twelve-hour ride over the snow-clad prairies of North Dakota, I arrived at Bismarck, whence I departed on the belated Twin City Express for St. Paul. Here I was to open a mission on the following Sunday, and, as was my custom, I rose early, and had nearly finished Matins and Lauds when interrupted by the remark given above.

I noticed that we were rapidly approaching the eastern terminus of the Northern Pacific and had only a few moments of leisure, so I put aside my breviary

and looked up. The young man who had spoken was quite prepossessing in appearance, athletic, intelligent, well-dressed. At first I could scarcely classify him. He did not appear "sporty," as some traveling men are termed, and yet there was a certain air about him which puzzled me.

"I am a Catholic priest," I answered, "but as I am a comparative stranger in St. Paul, I may not be able to give you any information —"

"Oh! It is not about St. Paul," said the young man, and there was a tinge of embarrassment in his tones that aroused my interest. "The difficulty — is with myself. Will you come into the drawing-room, sir? I should like to have a talk with you."

The manner which I had thought, unconsciously, a little overbearing, was now one of eager anxiety. He appeared like an honest young fellow in trouble, who felt rather diffident in making an appeal of this sort to a stranger. Very much attracted by his attitude, and the evident perturbation of his mind, I rose and followed him to his apartment.

"I am also a stranger in this section," he went on, after he had closed the door, and taken a seat opposite me, "but my name is well-known. I am Webster Van Deever, son of Homer Van Deever, head of the brokerage firm of New York and Chicago. Our family dates back to the New Amsterdam settlers, and I am my father's only child and heir."

I looked at him, I must confess, with astonishment. His manner was so earnest that I could not reconcile it with these somewhat boastful words.

"Are you a Catholic, Mr. Van Deever?"

"Oh, no! I'm not a Catholic," he answered, quickly.

"Not a Catholic! Then why —"

"I am an agnostic. I don't know a blessed thing about religion. Neither my father nor my grandfather were church members. I am not interested in religion in any way, and I don't want to discuss it."

I sat there absolutely puzzled. In the beginning I had expected that this conversation would be about religion, for somehow or other, when a Catholic priest enters a train, there is always sure to crop up a religious discussion of some sort. I had imagined this young man to be a repentant prodigal in need of advice and possibly spiritual assistance. His uncompromising remark showed me my error.

"Well, my son," I said, "if there is anything I can do for you, I wish you would state your case to me at once. We have only a few minutes left, and my destination is St. Paul."

"I — as I said, my difficulty is not a religious one," he began again, stumbling a little over the words. "It will sound foolish — perhaps — but we are strangers, we may never meet again —" He hesitated, flushing. Then he plunged into the subject as if anxious to get it off his mind: "It is about a young lady — a Catholic," he said. "A poor girl, at that, with neither blue blood nor money, who is in no way my social equal. I met her only a little over two weeks ago . . . and while I am not superstitious, she has haunted me ever since. I actually took this trip to the coast to

try to forget her. But it is impossible. So I had to speak to some one, who, I felt, would understand *her*. That is why I have asked you to listen to me."

I sat there quietly, weighing him and his speech.

"A poor girl, with neither blue blood nor money, in no way my social equal!"

I am afraid that these words were all that I clearly grasped as this conceited young man proceeded. They gave me the clue to his character. Webster Van Deever, son of Homer Van Deever, whose ancestors had settled New Amsterdam, imagined the whole world prostrate before him! The king's son could do no wrong! Ah! It was indeed a daring thing for this poor Catholic girl to flout him!

But my imagination was carrying me away — I must listen further.

"I am still in the dark," I suggested.

"This girl — this Margaret Redmond —"

"Margaret Redmond!" I interrupted. "There was a young lady of that name at St. Mary's-on-the-Raisin. Her father, was, I believe, a wealthy Chicago broker."

"Then you know her!" he exclaimed. "That is she. Her father lost all he had in the panic of some years ago. He made heroic efforts to save a home for his wife and daughter, but he did not succeed, and the strain and shock killed him. He has been dead two years. Miss Redmond opened an office in the Equitable Building, in Chicago, and is an expert and well-known stenographer."

"Is that so!" I exclaimed. "Well, she was always

a bright girl — her success does not astonish me. You met her, I presume, in a professional way?"

"Oh, no! I met her at the Charity Ball, to which she was escorted by Mr. White, an old and mutual friend, by whom we were introduced. You say you knew Miss Redmond as a schoolgirl! You should see her now! She is as graceful as a fawn — a real American beauty, with auburn hair, eyes as soft as a dove's —"

I could not contain myself. I heard many confessions, but this was a unique experience — a blasé young man expatiating on the charms of a young lady who had bewitched him! I burst into a hearty laugh.

"Don't, please!" said the young man, earnestly. "I fell in love with her the moment we met. She danced with me. From the ballroom I escorted her into a little alcove . . . I suppose I lost my head . . . ." He had the grace to pause here.

"Well?" I asked, gravely enough. "What happened?"

"I tried to kiss her."

"Oh! You did! And she resented it?"

"She was furious — why, her eyes fairly scorched me. She got up and rejoined her mother and Mr. White, and for the rest of the time I was there completely ignored me. I have not seen her since. And now I want to know what there is in the Catholic religion that would make her take such an attitude towards me? She knew who I was — I told her!"

The colossal vanity of this handsome young animal, his conceit and ignorance, were so patent, that I felt

a hot wave of indignation sweeping over me. My first impulse was perhaps the same as Margaret Redmond's had been — to rise and leave him. But my experience restrained me from hasty action. I had never met any one quite like this self-worshiper before. What, *what* had been his companions, his associates, that this young girl should have opened a new world to him? How he must be toadied to and flattered! How people must hang upon his words! Ah, was it any wonder that one such as Margaret Redmond must be, grounded in grace and virtue, would brush him aside like an annoying insect!

I am afraid I was uncharitable enough to rejoice over his humiliation, and yet I saw plainly that he was very much attracted. I pitied him, too, for his ignorance, his narrowness. The girl had fascinated him, and it was not to receive an explanation that he had asked me to listen to him, but because he wanted an opportunity to unburden his heart and mind.

I thanked God that the girl had been true to the teachings of St. Mary's, and I also felt that it was a pity that one so favored by nature and fortune should have such exaggerated ideas of his own importance. Had Webster Van Deever been the eldest of ten children of hard-working parents instead of the only and spoiled darling of wealth, he would have had a cleaner and saner outlook on life. He sat looking at me as these thoughts flashed through my mind.

"I am afraid," I said, coldly, "that even if I were the custodian of Miss Redmond's thoughts, and her

counselor, the time left us would not permit me to give you a satisfactory explanation."

"So! There *is* an explanation from a Catholic standpoint!" exclaimed young Van Deever. "I have always heard that Catholics are strange people . . . something like Shakers or Quakers . . . with queer ideas — but I haven't ever met any, only my servant Andy."

"There is an explanation from a moral standpoint," I said, a little testily. "You grossly insulted a modest and good young girl, who honored you by granting you the favor of a dance with her."

"Oh!" said Van Deever, with a wave of his hand, "that's nonsense. That was all very nice in the olden days when the people were absurdly proper and decorous, but we've gotten over that. The world has changed with the times — all but you Catholics, who, I suppose, still cling to your prudish notions! My father is a popular man, welcomed everywhere, accepted by the best people, who are proud to be among the number of his friends. I have always followed his advice and have found no reason to regret it. After all, a woman is really man's inferior. I am scrupulously courteous to every woman, but men have certain privileges, certain rights —"

"From a Christian standpoint, Mr. Van Deever, there are nobler things than the honors, riches and pleasures of this life, more lasting treasures than the goods of this world."

He looked at me with a cynical smile.

"We are not taught these things at the University," he said.

"To Miss Redmond," I pursued, quietly, "a true child of God, there is no greater pleasure than knowing, loving, and serving Him. That is why you are in every way her inferior, for your millions and your birth are merely accidents. It seems incredible that I should have to say this to any man or woman in this age and in this country. Miss Redmond values her dignity, her modesty, far above your wealth or your position, and she was morally bound to resent your unpardonable breach of etiquette."

The young man shrugged his shoulders.

"There may be something in that," he said carelessly. "And here is the depot, so that we can not pursue this question further. I have only one thing to say before bidding you good-by. I mean to kiss Miss Redmond — even if I have to marry her to do it."

"I rejoice sincerely," I retorted, "that I can not congratulate you on your prospects of success."

CHAPTER II

A FIXED RESOLVE

PERHAPS Webster Van Deever was more impressed by the priest than he cared to let him see. At any rate after the reverend gentleman left the train, the young man sat lost for a few moments in a profound reverie. He was absolutely ignorant of more than the mere outlines of Christianity, and as for Catholic belief — to him it seemed as if those who practiced that faith were forced to observe a weary round of rules to which no sensible man or woman could conform. Nevertheless, he had made up his mind to one thing: he had an end to attain, and to bring it about there should be no means left untried. What this end was declared itself during his wait at St. Paul. Alighting from the train, he wrote out a message to his Chicago office announcing his return. He then sent another telegram to Meyer and Son, well-known Chicago florists.

"Send two dozen American Beauty roses to Miss Margaret Redmond, 932 Equitable Building. Sign the card 'With a friend's best wishes.'

VAN DEEVER."

"That will do for the present," he said, pacing up and down the waiting-room.

It was something to have found an interest that was so vital in his hitherto idle, pleasure-loving life. Little by little the conversation with the priest returned to him. He was vaguely aware that he had been the object of some contempt, even disgust, although the calling of the man had kept his indignation under bounds. He realized the great gulf that separated him from Margaret Redmond — a gulf that the priest had understood existed, for he had given him a reason for her conduct. This thought aroused his envy, even his jealousy. He was face to face with a mystery. He had education, influence, wealth, but he was not happy. He had never been happy, and it was because he knew this that Margaret Redmond had aroused such different sentiments in his breast.

"She is a child of God," said the priest, "whose sole delight is in knowing, loving, and serving Him."

Ah! Then the object of some human lives was more than the material and the temporal! He was wrong, his whole world was wrong! He felt his soul hungering within him for an indefinable something that would put him on a level with that girl. On a level? Could it be possible he thought her his superior? In spite of his vain boasting, his assumed arrogance, his conceit, he did! And the superior, as well, of those others of his acquaintance who would have laughed indulgently over his attempted love-making. They would have understood his pleasantry — she understood, but would not tolerate it!

"She is a child of God!" said the priest again, in his ear. Well, all right, if that would solve the difficulty, he, Webster Van Deever, would see what it meant to be a child of God also!

Further thought was interrupted by the stentorian voice of the train crier.

"Chicago and Northwestern for Chicago! All aboard for Eau Claire — Elroy — Madison — Janesville — Chicago — Track — No. 5!"

As Webster Van Deever entered the drawing-room of the Badger State Express, he realized that his conversation with the priest had been as oil and wine poured into the wounds of his spirit. He remembered, with delight, his first glimpse of Margaret Redmond, only two short weeks before. He could see her in all her charming loveliness, Mr. White on one hand, her mother on the other. He eagerly sought the gentleman, and when Margaret bent her large, soft blue eyes upon him in pleasant greeting, and gave him her small hand with a delicious frankness, he was conscious of the great pleasure this moment occasioned him.

"Tickets!" suddenly demanded the conductor. "Tickets, tickets!"

Completely absorbed in his mental vision, Mr. Van Deever presented the official with his hat. That gentleman did not want a hat. His rough hand on Van Deever's shoulder aroused the young man from his delightful abstraction, and he scowled as he produced the slip of cardboard which alone seemed to satisfy the other's demands. He settled himself comfortably

then, and, being undisturbed, once more drifted off into the realms of fancy. She was no longer Miss Redmond — she was Margaret! Margaret! What an ideal couple they would make — he was tall and dark, she just up to his shoulder and fair as a lily. He prided himself on his manliness — she was certainly the most womanly of women!

As long as Van Deever confined himself to material matters he could proceed with mathematical accuracy. There was no further comparison now between himself and Margaret Redmond. Her attire had been so modest, her complexion so beautifully clear without a trace of artifice — all had been fresh, charming, natural.

And then those sparkling blue eyes flashed fire, that charming face was filled with indignation, that red mouth was curved in scorn and anger — all with the suddenness of a thunderclap out of a clear sky! His consternation had taken him from the ballroom; he resolved to go away, where he could think over the evening's incident at his leisure. Hence his disappearance from accustomed haunts for a fortnight.

And now that he had resolved to dare all once more, he felt at ease. He would compel this girl to acknowledge his importance. Thinking thus, he glanced at his watch, surprised to discover that it was past the noon hour, and that he had entirely forgotten his breakfast. The porter entered opportunely just then.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said, politely, "but don't you want some dinner?"

Webster Van Deever certainly wanted dinner, and ordered it, finishing it up with a good cigar. As the clouds of smoke formed, changed, and dissolved above his head, his day-dreams continued. The faces of friends, dearly-loved, floated before him, greeting him like fairies from a land of enchantment. He lived all his happiest moments over again — the happy days of boyish independence, the excitement of baseball and footfall, and the relaxation of vacation, the college debates, and the crowning glory of all, when, at his graduation, he read his original dissertation on " Rousseau and the Genesis of Darwin," which had won the applause of his associates, the degree of doctor of philosophy from the faculty, and the present of one million dollars from a proud and idolizing father!

Nor were feminine charms lacking from the array of faces. His handsome personality, fine physique, perfect health, and the charm of his wealth had won him smiles a plenty, and adulation that would have been less harmful had not the spoiled young fellow accepted it in such good faith. His position as manager of the Chicago office had not interfered with any of his pleasures. But he was awakened from his self-indulgent, self-satisfied mood when Margaret Redmond met his glance with her own charming, innocent gaze.

" Yes," echoed the words of the priest. " She is a child of God! And her whole delight consists in her knowing, loving, and serving Him!"

" After all," Webster Van Deever asked himself,

"why should we suppose that God does not exist? Does evolution adequately account for the existence of matter? Especially of organic matter? But if the creation theory is correct, how can we account for the presence of evil in the world? The God of goodness in whom Christians believe, should have prevented evil. . . .

"It is almost certain that I have free will. Supposing, then, that the God of Christianity is my Master, how would I fare before His judgment-seat if this train had been wrecked by falling down the mountain-side? . . .

"But my philosophy denies the existence of man's spiritual nature . . . and yet . . . and yet . . . does not Margaret Redmond's very fascination consist in the fact that we are direct opposites? She is refined, true . . . there are many young ladies of my acquaintance cultured and refined. . . . She is attractive physically . . . not more so than others whom I know. But she is spiritual, I am sensual — and as long as those others are vain, selfish, and worldly-minded as myself, I can not esteem them for the very faults which I feel they and I must have in her eyes."

So much for Webster Van Deever's reasoning. He did not know the truth St. Paul expressed to the Galatians — he had never heard it: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, for these are contrary one to the other." He was simply exemplifying it by his conduct, for never is this truth more clearly proven than by the fact that

every man, no matter how loose his conduct has been, instinctively seeks a pure, clean-hearted woman for his wife.

And thinking these things he drifted off into the land of dreams. Margaret Redmond appeared to him as she had been the night of the ball, charming, graceful and lovely. In her hand, however, she seemed to hold a roll of manuscript, and as he gazed upon it, he saw that it was his dearly-loved essay, "Rousseau and the Genesis of Darwinism."

"Will you do me a favor, Mr. Van Deever?" she asked, in a pleading tone.

He marveled how she had heard of this, which had really been the one achievement of his life of which he was inordinately proud. But he answered without hesitation that he would stop at no sacrifice for her sake.

"Then burn this nonsense," she said, and her eyes flashed and her lips curled as they had done on that never-to-be-forgotten night.

"I will, I will!" he exclaimed. "Anything, anything, only do not look at me like that, Margaret!"

"Chicago! All change!"

The porter, with a broad smile, was standing over him, shaking him vigorously. He had overheard that last remark, which Van Deever had uttered aloud.

"You certainly had a fine sleep, mister!" he said, as the young man arose, and, after a liberal tip, turned from his compartment toward the station.

CHAPTER III

PERPLEXITIES

PHILIP REDMOND had been a Georgetown graduate, and began his business career in Baltimore, where he met and married Katharine Hawley. Shortly afterward the young man inherited a small fortune and went to Chicago with his bride, opening a brokerage office in State Street. By integrity and application he succeeded so well in a material way that he was able to provide comforts, even luxuries, for his wife and their one child, Margaret. As the girl grew up she was given the advantages of a thorough education, and then, as she and her father were inseparable, and as she dearly loved to assist him in his work, she took a commercial course after her graduation, and acquired special proficiency as a stenographer. Because of this it happened that when the crisis came, and Margaret was unexpectedly thrown on her own resources, she was equipped to enter the ranks of the bread-earners. Her father's death, and the feeling that her mother would depend entirely upon her only child in the future weighed heavily on the girl at first, especially the sense of responsibility. But this soon passed, and ere long she took a more cheerful view.

So, in spite of the protests of her friends, Margaret Redmond opened an office in the Equitable Building, and by her charming manner and conscientious and clever work, soon established a reputation. She had done fairly well for two years past, though she was never as prosperous as her friends imagined. As long as work was plentiful and the income regular, she was able to meet current expenses. But there were times when she was forced to draw on her meager reserve. The coming of the dull winter season often saw a material increase in expenses, and an alarming irregularity of income, which soon ceased altogether, practically. She was passing through one of these experiences now — only that it seemed a little harder to bear than the preceding ones, for she was forced to draw out the last dollar she had deposited.

This was surely enough to fill the most courageous heart with gloom, and it certainly had a depressing effect on Margaret Redmond. She had trusted in Providence utterly to see her through this period of disaster, but she asked herself often, with the humility of a really pious soul, if she deserved the blessings of heaven. At this time there was an even greater trial in store. Her mother was taken quite ill one morning, first with a severe chill, followed by a high fever. Though Mrs. Redmond's health was not robust, she had managed to do all that was necessary in her small home. Of late, however, this strength seemed failing, and Dr. King, the family physician, hastily summoned, did all he could to make her com-

fortable. He ordered her to remain in bed and insisted on extreme punctuality in the giving of the medicine. He shook his head gravely in answer to Margaret's inquiring look as she accompanied him to the door.

"I'm afraid it is the grippe," he said. "She needs absolute quiet and good nursing. I will call again this evening. Be sure, above all, to give her the medicine regularly."

This injunction was unnecessary for a daughter as devoted as Margaret had always been. She busied herself about the house and waited on her mother with tenderest care, determined that no matter how her affairs went she would not leave her alone until she was fully recovered.

"God bless you, Margaret!" murmured Mrs. Redmond, feebly. "I can never thank God enough for the consolation you have been to me since your dear father died. But you must not neglect the office — go down if only for an hour, since I am so comfortable. Give me my beads like a good girl. So. Thank you, dear."

No wonder Margaret Redmond felt worried and depressed as she kissed her mother good-by for a short while. Never before had the sense of responsibility and helplessness weighed so heavily upon her. She seated herself at her desk and tried to think. Instead of aiding, fortune seemed to taunt her this gloomy January morning. She could see no ray of sunlight in the darkness, and lost in painful thought she was staring abstractedly before her. Rent-bills,

grocery-bills, light-bills, coal-bills, doctor's-bills, seemed to assail her on every side. In her distress Margaret breathed a fervent prayer to Our Lady of the Rosary that she might tide her over present difficulties. For once her prayer seemed answered before she had concluded her devotions. Margaret distinctly heard the clicking of the elevator — then came a rapid step along the corridor, and a quick knock at her door.

The girl's heart jumped expectantly as she looked up and said, "Come in!"

To her surprise a messenger boy entered, deposited a parcel on her desk, raised his cap, bowed politely and disappeared as quickly as he had come, before the girl had time to ask him any questions.

"Thank God!" she said. "It's some typewriting to be done, I suppose."

She picked up the parcel — it seemed very light, and now Margaret was indeed mystified. She opened it with some misgivings, and there, before her astonished gaze, lay a bunch of superb American Beauty roses. She picked up the card attached. "With a friend's best wishes." For a few moments the girl sat staring at the roses, inhaling their delicious fragrance. What woman does not revel in flowers! and these, among the choicest she had ever seen, were splendid. She took one of the long-stemmed beauties in her hand and brushed it softly across her face with a caressing motion.

"Who sent you?" she asked, coaxingly. "Where did you come from? Not from any old friend, that

is sure, or you would have gone to the house. From one of my employers? But that is simply out of the question."

A vague foreboding of some new danger suddenly descended upon the girl. In her abstraction she pulled at the rose she held. Unconscious of what she was doing, she stripped the petals one by one until only the naked stem remained in her trembling hand. The sound of merry voices roused her, and she looked around to see two of her girl friends entering the room.

"Well, I declare!" cried Genevieve Harty, with a meaning glance at the roses.

"Congratulations, Margaret!" said Hattie Brown.

Then Genevieve, looking at her friend, saw something clear and silvery shining on her dark lashes. With an affectionate gesture, she put her arm about her, and kissed her gently on the cheek.

"What is the matter?" she asked, with some concern. "We've just been laid off — no work for us for a while, the season is at its worst now. We thought we'd pay you a visit in passing. Why are you so downhearted?"

"Especially when surrounded by American Beauties!" laughed the other young lady.

"It was good of you to think of me," said Margaret, gratefully.

"You're not rushed to death, I notice," said Miss Brown. "But who sent you these flowers? There are no hard times in that person's family."

"Tell us, Margaret," urged Genevieve.

"Why I can't," answered Margaret Redmond. "I don't know — and I can't even guess. The messenger boy who brought them was gone before I could ask a single word."

"Lucky, lucky!" sighed Miss Brown, with a teasing smile.

"But you were put out over something when we came in," said Genevieve. "We knocked three or four times. What is the trouble?"

"Lots of it," said Margaret. "Mother is down with the grippe, and she's never been strong, so that I am afraid of complications. Then I've been without a single thing to do for a week; there's nothing in prospect — and bills, bills, bills! Wouldn't that bother *you?*"

"It certainly would," agreed Genevieve. "And on top of that comes the mystery of the roses." She bent toward the box and sniffed luxuriously. "Aren't they perfect beauties!"

Miss Brown picked them up and thrust her piquant dark face through the clustering bloom.

"I have a suggestion to make," she said, "and lots of fun it will be, too. Shut up shop, Margaret, and we'll run off to a fortune-teller and find out who sent them. I know a fine woman."

"I won't do anything of the kind," said Margaret, quickly and decidedly, "if I never find out! I haven't any money even to give away — and that would be throwing it away."

"I agree with you," said Genevieve, in disgust. "No fortune-teller for me!"

"Why, Genevieve Harty! Since when have you become scrupulous? You know you went to one of them only a month ago," exclaimed Miss Brown, a little ruffled at their apparent and decided rebuff.

"I did," said Genevieve, gravely, "and thereby hangs a tale — not as sweet nor as mystifying as the tale of the roses, but — Well, Father Morrin had something to say about it last Saturday night — he made me squirm, I tell you! But he couldn't make me feel any more foolish than I knew myself to be."

Margaret looked at her inquiringly.

"Now you know some of them do tell you —" began Miss Brown.

"Indeed they do. Listen. I knew it was silly — and I think sensible girls are silly quite often over some things — but I've learned *my* lesson. We just go out of pure curiosity, willing to believe all that nonsense about a happy marriage and lots of money and all that — for the amusement of hearing it. At least most of us. Only the really stupid ones have any faith in them. Well, I was twenty-three last month, and something put it into my head to try one of them just for fun. Off I went and paid fifty cents to learn that I would marry a very rich and handsome young man, who would make me a splendid and congenial companion! We were to live a long life of perfect happiness!"

"Oh! Go on!" exclaimed Miss Brown, fervently. "That was delightful."

"So it was — but I wanted something additional —

I wanted to hear that all over again, and from some one who could tell me more — at an advanced price, of course. It was my birthday, and I felt I could be extravagant. This time the charge was a dollar."

"And?" suggested Miss Brown.

"Yes, and? The wretch — I could hardly believe my ears! — said 'I am very sorry, my dear young lady, but this line in your hand denotes that you will marry a drunkard, who will abuse and neglect you. After four years of married life you will die of a broken heart!'"

Genevieve's expression was so lugubrious, and her mimicry so perfect, that Margaret laughed heartily. She could not help it. Her friend made a little grimace.

"The idea!" said Miss Brown. "And she charged you a dollar for that?"

"There is more to come," pursued Genevieve. "Let me be an example — a horrible example! Up I got, really indignant. I was so convinced that the first one was right that I was willing to spend my last penny to confirm my belief in her. So I went in to that Hindoo fakir in the Annex. There were many ladies waiting their turn when I got there — and I counted twenty-eight while I was waiting. Twenty-eight at two dollars and a half a piece! Think of that! I amused myself doing the sum mentally. At last it was my turn. I paid the fee and got a little blue-colored slip. My friend the fakir read my hand, consulted his charts, shuffled his cards again and again.

Then he sat staring into a dish of water until I got the fidgets, after which he read for a while in some old book he had.

"Then turning to me he said sympathetically. 'I see before you a quiet, uneventful life.'

"'Shall I marry soon?' I inquired.

"He shook his head.

"'No,' he answered, 'there is no marriage indicated. You are destined to live your life alone.'

"Now, what do you think of that? Was there ever such a lot of humbug?" demanded Genevieve.

"I think so too," said Miss Brown, decidedly. "I guess Margaret is right — it would be throwing money away."

"For your wisdom you both deserve an American Beauty," said Margaret, handing each a rose.

"Oh, thank you!" they cried together. And once more the topic of the roses was brought under discussion. Margaret's business and visiting lists were gone over, but not one person presented himself or herself who could possibly have sent them. Miss Brown informed Margaret that her people were going to start for the Pacific coast in a few days, and that she was going with them. She then took an affectionate leave of both girls and went away.

Genevieve's naturally kind heart had already prompted her to a course of action, and she now told Margaret that she meant to stay with her and take care of her mother while she, Margaret, looked for employment. It took a good deal of eloquent pleading to persuade the girl to accept this generous offer, but

she finally agreed. Soon after Genevieve left, Margaret, too, departed. On her way she slipped into St. Mary's to say a fervent prayer before the Tabernacle. She left some of her roses at Mary's shrine and before the statue of the Sacred Heart. When she finally arrived home, she found her mother feeling much better, and playfully shook out her fragrant blossoms on the snowy counterpane. Mrs. Redmond was inclined to chide her for her extravagance, but when she heard the story, she too, was puzzled.

CHAPTER IV

ENLIGHTENMENT

AT the depot Webster Van Deever was greeted by one Ellsworth Jenkins, who had come down in an automobile in answer to his telegram. As Mr. Jenkins was nominally the vice-president of the western branch of the Van Deever concern, and in reality the head of the Chicago office, he is perhaps worthy of more than a passing notice. In the words of one of his associates, he was "a man possessed of the most unenviable qualities, deceitful, over-bearing, apparently without heart, and with an utter disregard for the feelings of others. He never permitted a wrong, or even an imaginary slight, to pass unnoticed, and once his resentment was aroused he would brood over the injury for weeks and even months while he deliberately planned a revenge he never failed to take."

His appearance did not belie this description of his character. He was short of stature, slim and attenuated of build, with an abnormally long and thin countenance; his complexion was sallow, his eyes pale-blue, his nose thin and pointed, and his mouth curved downward by an habitual constriction of the lips. He wore his pale-yellow hair quite long, parted in the middle, and then combed in such a way that it clung tightly to his scalp from his forehead to the back of his neck.

"The man with the withered mane," the clerks, who heartily hated him, called him.

"How is business?" asked Van Deever, now, grasping Mr. Jenkins' hand and shaking it heartily.

"Business is good and things are going quite briskly," he answered. "We are all right at the office, only that Miss Long has been taken ill and has had to go to the hospital — just when we are making out our annual report to New York."

"That's too bad," said Webster Van Deever, lightly. "Have you found a substitute?"

"Not yet."

"I think I know of one," went on the young man, after a few moments' reflection. "As long as affairs are all right, we can let them go until morning. I had a fine trip and after a night's rest I will be in good condition for work. Let us go to the Auditorium."

When Webster Van Deever finally arrived at the magnificent mansion which his father owned on Jackson Boulevard he was in excellent spirits. Pleasant thoughts, the refreshing sleep on the train, followed by the encouraging report of Mr. Jenkins and a hearty meal at the Auditorium, had brought peace to body and soul. But the image of Margaret Redmond would not be effaced, and it came before him all the more strongly when, at the entrance of his home, he was met by his valet, Andy O'Regan. Devotedly attached to the young man, whom he had held in his arms when he was a child, he had heard with delight of his return to the city. Now, as the automobile drew up before the entrance he hastened forward

to meet him, his honest face beaming with pleasure.

Like Miss Redmond, Andy was a devout Catholic. This thought, which struck Van Deever forcibly now, seemed to create a new bond between them. He wondered a little if the beautiful girl he worshiped, the priest who had only kept his scorn of him from his voice and face by a great effort, and this deeply-attached servant really believed in the same things — the same God and the same faith. He would try to find out.

"Are you glad to see me back, Andy?" he asked, as he entered his apartments, followed by Andy, bearing his traveling bag.

"Troth, I am that, as sure as God made the world!" declared Andy with fervor. "And pleased to see you looking so well, too, after your journey."

The young man laughed and lighted a cigar. Andy's words fitted into his thoughts without a jarring note.

"As sure as God made the world!" he repeated, seating himself before the fire. "Then you're not sure at all, Andy — for this world wasn't made. It has always existed."

"I have heard," said Andy, seriously, as he opened the hand-bag and shook out some of the garments it contained, "that there are learned people that say such things. But the first words of the Bible are good enough for me. 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth.'"

"Then you don't agree with the learned ones," said Van Deever, idly.

"Sure, Pope Leo, God rest him, says, 'We must give the learned time to learn by blundering.' From the time I was knee-high to a grasshopper to this day, I never saw as much as a mudpie that wasn't made by somebody."

"Good, good!" said Webster Van Deever, laughing at the quaint way in which his old servant had disposed of the cardinal principle of materialism. "But what do you think of the world making itself."

Andy beamed on his master with genial triumph.

"If it did that it would be a very smart world indeed, Mr. Van Deever. It must have gotten out a patent on its work and crowded all competition off the market."

Again Van Deever laughed heartily — he had not known Andy was so original.

"It must even have gone another step and prevented all imitation. At any rate there hasn't been any one else enter the race."

"Why, Andy, you're a philosopher!" said Van Deever, "An out and out philosopher! But what would you say to the theory so many people hold today — that all this world is God?"

"And would you believe it yourself, sir?" asked Andy, frankly. "Did you ever hear of a rock thinking, or of a humming-bird writing a song, or a cat playing the fiddle, now did you? I'm afraid this poor world has too weak a constitution to be God. God is an intelligent free being. He is supreme. The world has no understanding. It is governed by fixed laws, and is subject to their author."

"You don't understand, Andy," said Webster Van Deever. "The universe is God. The material part which we see is His body, and the principle of vitality is His soul."

Andy shook his head gravely.

"Maybe I don't understand you right, sir — it's hard for a poor old man like me to be keeping up to date with them new-fangled notions." He was arranging Van Deever's brushes on the dresser as he spoke. "If I would be going to the butcher-shop and buying you a slice of steak, now, would I be fetching you home a bit of God — God forgive me for saying it!" he ejaculated. "Or if you had met with an accident on the train coming home, and been killed, would we have lost another part of God?"

"Oh, no, that would have been the absorption into God of your beloved master," said Van Deever. He wondered why his old servant had made that remark — had he not asked himself on the way home what would occur to him, if he fell into the hands of the living God? Andy gave him a keen glance.

"That's a bad system, for you if not for me," said Andy.

"In what way?" asked his master.

"Why, if I had murdered you instead of serving you and your father faithfully these last twenty-six years I would have hastened your perfection by many a day. None of that for me! Mr. Van Deever! It's just as our priest said in his sermon last Sunday. 'The human heart is always corrupted first,' said he,

'before the head rules God out of existence or frees itself from His dominion!'"

"And that's the opinion you have of me after all these years!" said Van Deever, in an injured tone.

"There was nothing further from my mind," protested Andy, hastily, when he saw that his master had applied words to himself which he had only stated as a general truth. "You never were a church member, sir, but at any rate, you've treated me like a Christian, and far better than I deserve."

Though amused and even surprised by the extent of his servant's reasoning, Webster Van Deever had not yet discovered wherein lay his likeness to Margaret Redmond. He felt that he would like to go into the matter further with Andy. He had thought to puzzle and confuse him, but he found that he had done neither.

"I wonder if I'll surprise you, Andy, when I tell you I went to confession to-day," he said.

Andy O'Regan stared at his master in such incredulousness and perplexity that Van Deever laughed outright.

"You shouldn't make fun of sacred things, sir," said Andy, in a hurt tone.

"But I did go, Andy. I met a priest on the train and told him all my troubles. Isn't that what Catholics call going to confession?"

"Maybe it is, maybe it isn't," said Andy, somewhat irritated. "When I go to confession it is to tell my offences against God and His holy Church."

"I don't think I looked at it that way," said Van Deever. "What else do you do, Andy?"

"Oh, with the poor publican I say, 'God have mercy on me, a sinner. I am sorry for having abused your infinite goodness, and I resolve from now on to live as a decent Christian.'"

"And what has the priest to do with it?" asked Van Deever, curiously.

"Why, sir, he stands in God's place to me, and when he says 'Go in peace!' or 'God bless you!' I feel light and glad at heart. Once, sir, when I was a little lad, I disobeyed my mother, and I knew that I deserved and ought to get a sound trouncing. But she gave me a kiss and a big hug instead — when I told her I was sorry and wouldn't do it again. That's the way confession makes you feel, sir."

He looked at his master a moment, curiously.

"It isn't true now, is it?" he said, coaxingly. "I didn't know you were a child of God. Forgive me for asking, but did the priest say 'God bless you!' or anything like that?"

Van Deever thought of his conversation with the priest, and wondered what had come over his sentiments to make him feel so thoroughly ashamed.

"Indeed he did not, Andy," he answered. "On the contrary he said he could not congratulate me on my prospects."

"God help you, sir," said Andy, with sincere compassion. "You have my sympathy and my prayers. But, sure, sir, you didn't tell him right — maybe he didn't understand you. It would be a terrible thing to

have a priest tell you you were on your way to perdition."

"No, Andy," said Van Deever, touched by the old man's evident solicitude, "I am not a Catholic, and I did not go to what you would call confession. But I must ask you one more question. What do you mean by the words 'a child of God'?"

"Why — a friend of God, sir," said Andy.

"You'll have to be plainer than that, Andy."

"You see, sir, if your mother took in a poor, ragged boy off the street, and treated him as if he were your brother, she'd become his mother by adoption, wouldn't she? Well, when we're baptized the Almighty takes us as His children, and gives us His Son for our brother. Now if, after baptism, I appreciate the goodness of God and try to please Him in all I do, I am a child of God, indeed."

"That is certainly clear enough, at any rate," said Van Deever. "After all, it is only the person who appreciates God's goodness and tries to please God always who would have the moral character of Margaret Red —" He saw Andy's questioning gaze fastened upon him, and checked himself hurriedly. "You see the priest on the train said something about being a child of God which I failed to understand. I comprehend now, Andy. But I'm keeping you up late," he added. "Go to bed."

"You mustn't think I mind it, Mr. Webster," said Andy, with great earnestness. "This has been one of the happiest hours of my life since I entered your father's employment twenty-six years ago. Good-

night, sir — and may God's angels watch over you!"

"Thank you, Andy," said Van Deever, looking at him in the puzzled way of a man who understands little, for he had no clue as to why this hour should be the happiest of Andy's life. "I wish that one, at least, of God's angels might remember me in her prayers."

As soon as Andy O'Regan reached his own room he knelt beside his bed, and thanked God for this unexpected favor. When this good man entered the Van Deever service so many years before, the elder, then a comparatively poor man, and filled with a strong hatred for the Catholic faith, had exacted a solemn promise that, unless he were asked, he would never mention his religion to any member of the Van Deever family. Even in those days the prejudice against the Catholic religion was much stronger than it is today. Andy promised, and faithfully and honestly kept his word. Nevertheless, he had not failed to prime himself with reasons for the faith that was in him, and twenty-six years of such preparation is apt to give a man a wide and extensive knowledge of his subject. He thanked God with all his heart that the time had come; he prayed that the young man he loved might be really sincere in putting the questions he did; and he asked that opportunity might soon arise for further conversation on the subject. And then he besought of God to save one who was so naturally kind and good from the consequences which he feared the priest had predicted.

It was late when Webster Van Deever retired. At one o'clock he was still standing before the fireplace, absorbed in thought. And on the glowing gas logs rested strange black embers, as of charred paper.

CHAPTER V

A MAN OF ACTION

AS soon as Andy went away Webster Van Deever turned his chair, and faced the cheerful glow of the leaping flames in the grate. His hands were in his pockets, his large eyes fixed on the fire with an absorbed expression.

"If I appreciate the goodness of God, and seek to please Him in all things, I am a child of God indeed," he repeated again and again, until the words seemed to glow in his imagination like the flames before him.

"That girl makes God the beginning, the motive power, and the end of her existence," he reflected. "And I have been taught and believed that I was the pivot on which the universe revolved."

He shook his head.

"At least," he said, half-aloud, "I can see how antipodal we have been. Can we meet each other halfway now? I have been drifting all my life — I have no principles to sacrifice. Am I willing to adopt principles for her sake? She appears to me as both a beacon and a harbor of safety."

Again he mused upon these words.

"But Margaret! Will she sacrifice any of her principles for me? It has been done by others — but will she do it?" He asked this question with some

misgivings. "Yet she must," he concluded, "since harmony is necessary to mutual happiness, and mutual sacrifice will be necessary to produce this harmony. A child of God and a man of the world! Margaret will understand that I must act as a man of the world. I will be careful not to pain her in any way. . . ."

He was thoughtful then for a few moments.

"But first I must become better acquainted with her. She must come into the office — and then, if she is all that I imagine her to be, I will win my way into her heart. What woman could repulse kindness, thoughtfulness, attention, affection? The day shall come when she will give me her hand and her lips of her own free will, and accept me as her husband! I shall give up much for her sake, and she must give up much for mine."

And then he shook his dark head impatiently.

"Fool, fool!" he said. "Would the sacrifice I asked not rob her of the very charm of character that I find so fascinating — her remoteness, her aloofness, her modesty, her sterling sense of right and wrong? Would it not make her a traitor to her conscience, and to that God whose child she is? Would it not pave the way to misery for us both? No, no! She must remain as she is — God's beloved, and if I would travel through life with her I must rise to her level!"

And then, in the flames before him, he seemed to see Margaret's face, her eyes scornful, her lips curving, holding in her hand his dissertation on "Rousseau." He remembered his dream of that day and the words of the girl in that dream. "Burn this nonsense!"

"I will, I will!" he exclaimed. He rose to his feet, went to the drawer of his desk and pulled out the manuscript of his beloved essay. It was still dear to him — his crowning production of University days. And yet the doctrine it maintained was far removed from the sentiments held by Margaret Redmond.

He watched the pages burn without regret. He had started on a new course — a new life opened before him. He was satisfied.

. . . . . .

After greeting the clerks pleasantly when he reached the office on the following morning Webster Van Deever approached Mr. Jenkins and spoke of the subject which now filled his thoughts.

"Perhaps we can secure Miss Redmond's services, temporarily, during Miss Long's illness," he said. "Her office is at 932 Equitable Building. You know how bright she is, so call on her as soon as you can, and bring her back with you, if she will come. And," he added, as if by an afterthought, "don't mention my name. If she accepts, I will arrange about the salary." And having attended to various urgent matters, Van Deever went into his private office to take care of the mail which had accumulated during his absence.

When Mr. Jenkins entered the elevator in the Equitable Building, it happened that a young lady of prepossessing appearance entered with him. Both alighted at the same floor and directed their steps toward room 932. Margaret Redmond had accepted the kind offer of her old friend and schoolmate, Gene-

vieve Harty, to care for her mother during her absence from home, and had come to the office hoping almost against hope that she might find some work offered. She was, therefore, well pleased when Mr. Jenkins entered the room behind her.

"You are Miss Redmond?" he asked, politely. "Our stenographer is down with the grippe, and as this is our busiest season I have come to see if you can help us out — at least until we have made up our annual statement."

Margaret was quite accustomed to "rush" positions of this sort, which generally meant long hours.

"I shall be very happy to be of assistance," she answered. "But I can not promise to give you any more than the regular day's service. My mother is quite ill, and I must be at home in reasonable time."

"We shall only ask the time you can afford to give," said Mr. Jenkins, pleasantly. "And we are prepared to remunerate you well."

"That is kind," said Margaret, really eager to avail herself, if possible, of this tempting offer, and to earn a few dollars to cover current expenses. "I will go with you now, if you are ready."

Before accepting such a position under other circumstances, Margaret would have made careful inquiries about the nature of the work to be done, as well as the people with whom she would have dealings. But now, the question of the time spent away from her mother being settled, Margaret, like a drowning person grasping at a straw, was not disposed to be over-particular.

All unconscious of the double surprise that awaited her, she followed Mr. Jenkins to the office of the Van Deever concern, and her heart began to beat with strange emotion when she discovered that they approached the very building which she had so often visited during her earlier and happier days! These had been her father's own rooms! And now she stood on the threshold of what had been for years his own private office, where she worked with him and beside him!

No wonder her heart ached and her eyes grew moist! And then she entered the room to meet her new employer, vaguely fancying that she could see her father's form seated in his old familiar place at the big desk. Her sweet lips trembled as she closed the door behind her. And, then, from her father's place, rose the tall, dark young man who had once so presumptuously offended her!

He could not perceive her agitation without guessing at its cause. He bowed distantly and politely.

"It is indeed kind of you," he began, in a calm, business-like voice, "to help us out like this, Miss Redmond. Mr. Jenkins has told me your mother is ill, so we will allow you to regulate your own hours and we know we shall not be the sufferers." Again he bowed, showing his firm, white teeth in a pleasant smile. "It is nothing serious, I hope?"

"She has never been very strong," murmured Margaret. Her limbs were trembling now, and her fair face had grown very pale. "I am sorry, Mr. Van Deever," she said, trying to control her voice and put

from her the bitter and sad memories which the sight of this room had awakened. Here she had witnessed her father's anguish and worry, and it was from the day of his failure that her mother's health had begun to wane. "I am sorry," she repeated, "but I fear that I can not accept this position."

A look of blank disappointment overspread the young man's dark face. Her distress was so apparent that he was deeply touched, and being a man of noble impulse and quick decision, he said that which came uppermost to his mind.

"Perhaps you fear she will not have proper care? Is that it? We would gladly engage a professional nurse —"

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Margaret, deeply embarrassed now at his evident solicitude. "I could not work here, where my —" she hesitated. "There are other circumstances which will prevent me accepting your kind offer. I thank you very much, sir, and wish you good —"

"Miss Redmond!" exclaimed Webster Van Deever, in a panic. He had absolutely no clue but one to her distressed manner, he had no knowledge of her father's affairs, beyond a general one, and was ignorant of the fact that he stood, practically, on the very spot where that dear dead father had once stood. He could see nothing in this but a reference to his lamentable conduct at the Charity Ball, and a reminder that he had not yet attempted to apologize to her.

"Please," he said, "do not go like this — do not revenge yourself on me now, for an act which I de-

plore with all my heart! If you knew how I have suffered since, you would pity me! How humiliated and miserable I have been!" He advanced a step nearer and held out his hand pleadingly. "I apologize with all my heart, and beg of you to forgive me for my detestable conduct!"

Thoroughly disconcerted and embarrassed, Margaret Redmond stood looking at the young man with wondering eyes. She had, indeed, seen him before — a somewhat disagreeable nonentity, to be brushed aside as some annoying insect might have been. She had not forgotten the incident connected with this young man, but she had not recollected it again, and certainly it would not interfere with the dignity of the services which she, the well-trained and efficient business woman, was prepared to render any employer. Now, however, as he stood before her, with an honest appeal on his handsome face, he won her instant esteem. She would have ignored the incident, but her womanly generosity impelled her to reveal the real cause of her emotion.

"Do not refer to that occurrence, I beg of you!" she said, gently. "That, indeed, is not the cause of my hesitation. But this was my father's private office. He was engaged in business here for many years, and it was here that he suffered the wreck of all his fortune, crushed by unscrupulous rivals. I did not know I was coming to this place this morning, Mr. Van Deever. When I last saw this room we had everything we could desire, and now I come to it as a stranger to earn my bread."

She had scarcely ceased when she reproached herself for this outburst of confidence in an utter stranger — and then she tried to excuse herself by reflecting that she was but returning his kindness to her. Surely his sympathy deserved a few pleasant words in return! Little idea had the young man that the unscrupulous rivals of whom the young girl spoke were near and dear to him.

"You have been very brave to take so much responsibility on your shoulders, and to act in such a courageous manner," he said, kindly. "And perhaps it will be a further test of your courage to remain with us now. It is difficult to secure anyone who is efficient and capable at such short notice, and even if we could," with a smile, "we prefer you. I want you to show your generous forgiveness of the past by remaining here."

Van Deever's tact, as well as his sympathetic kindness, made a deep impression. The girl, therefore, could hesitate no longer, and she would not feel it right, especially when she so needed the position. She started in immediately, and her efficiency did not fail when put to the test. She worked rapidly and accurately. With the coming of the noon-hour, the young man approached her desk.

"I am passing your house on the way to lunch," he said, "and my car is at the door. Won't you allow me to take you that far? You will be able to reach there so much more quickly."

Margaret looked up with some misgivings, but his whole manner was so diffident and so kind, that she

gave a reluctant consent. As she stepped into the machine Van Deever handed her a small envelope.

"I have no doubt you will need money for immediate expenses," he said, "so I am giving you a month's salary in advance. You will have to take care of Miss Long's desk for that time at least and afterward — well, I have other work in mind. Our business has increased tremendously of late."

Margaret's head seemed to reel. She was so bewildered that she could not decide whether she was doing right in accepting this or not. She looked straight before her, pondering.

"You will be surprised, perhaps, that I seem to take so much interest in your work and in you," the young man pursued. "But I really admire your courage. And you did me an immense service. I am a better man just for having known you, Miss Redmond."

Margaret was young, lovely, and human, with all her sterling qualities. She had been used to the comforts and luxuries of life and the attentions of a devoted father. All these had been conspicuously absent for the last four years, and now the subtle flattery conveyed by this young man's words, his evident sympathy and his practical way of showing it, impressed her to a greater degree than she was aware of.

"I — shall accept this," she said, after a moment, indicating the envelope. "Under other circumstances I could not, but for the present I am grateful and I thank you. I will try to do my best to please you."

And with these words she sank back in the seat, and

said nothing more until the automobile drew up in front of her modest home. Genevieve Harty was at the window.

"Oh, oh! I declare! Here's Margaret!" she exclaimed. "In an automobile too, if you please! And with as charming a young man beside her — my, isn't he handsome! He's coming in, he's coming in!"

And indeed Webster Van Deever had expressed a wish to see Mrs. Redmond for a moment, and Margaret did not refuse to allow him to enter. Her conscience was in arms, she felt guilty of some error, as she led the way into the pretty sitting-room. The whole morning had been an upsetting one, she thought, with some perturbation, and she could not decide, yet, what she was to do. Mrs. Redmond was feeling quite bright, greeted her daughter warmly, and on being introduced to Mr. Van Deever gave him a pleasant welcome. She had forgotten the chance acquaintance of New Year's Eve. But now, when she heard the name, a thoughtful line crept between her brows.

"Are you related to Mr. Homer Van Deever of New York? Mr. Redmond, my husband, used to transact business with him."

"Why, I am his son!" said Webster Van Deever, well-pleased to think that Margaret's mother was not altogether a stranger.

"Oh! How long have you been in Chicago?"

"Only since June — I came here soon after my graduation," he replied. "But the branch office was established four years ago by my father's confidential agent, Mr. Jenkins."

A peculiar expression came over Mrs. Redmond's face, and she took no further part in the conversation. The young man saw that in some way he had made an unfavorable impression, and he was anxious to retrieve the ground he had unconsciously lost. As he passed through the parlor he observed two large pictures hung on the wall. One was the well-known picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the other of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. These pictures held absolutely no meaning for young Mr. Van Deever, who had never seen their like before.

Turning to Margaret, he remarked, pleasantly, "Are these relatives of yours, Miss Redmond?"

Genevieve Harty looked at him with incredulous surprise, and Margaret, glancing from him to the pictures and back again, seemed scarcely to believe her ears.

"Relatives! Why, no, Mr. Van Deever, they are not relatives."

He saw that he had blundered.

"I imagined I caught a resemblance between yourself and the lady," he persisted. Then his eyes fell on an elaborately bound volume lying on the table. For once he felt sure of his ground.

"That is a handsome binding," he said, laying his hand on the book. "Handsomer than I've ever seen on a dictionary before."

"A dictionary!" cried Margaret in an injured tone. "That's the family Bible."

"We've never had a family Bible," said Van Deever, with some humility. "In fact, I may as well

acknowledge my ignorance at once, and tell you that I've never read any of the Bible in my life. My old servant, Andy, is fond of quoting it to me. Would you mind lending me this copy, Miss Redmond?"

Now it would have been an easy matter for Webster Van Deever to procure as many copies of the Bible as he might care to have, without asking Margaret Redmond for hers. But perhaps it would not have been as easy to find further excuse to call on her, and this excuse he felt he must have.

"Why, of course, you can have it, Mr. Van Deever," said Margaret Redmond, rather puzzled, it must be confessed, at his conduct — as his whole conduct of the morning had perplexed her.

As the young man turned toward the door Genevieve Harty raised her eyebrows innocently, and pointed to the roses on the center-table.

"Are you an admirer of American Beauties, Mr. Van Deever?" she asked, with an arch smile. From the first sight of the young man she had connected him with the roses, and now sought to elicit some sign from him that would indicate his part in the mystery. Van Deever, not thinking of the roses — in fact he had not thought of them since sending them — bowed politely.

"There are two American beauties whom I admire exceedingly," he said, and left the room.

CHAPTER VI

REVELATIONS

IF Webster Van Deever had followed his inclinations, there would have been no limit to the sum he would have placed in the envelope which he handed to Margaret. But he was wise enough to feel that he must exercise great caution, if he would not, perhaps, prejudice the girl still further. Her cold manner and the apparent effort she forced herself to make, to treat him with cordiality, warned him to be circumspect.

Now, however, the girl opened the envelope. Inside were seven crisp twenty dollar bills — one hundred and forty dollars. He was paying her, then, at the rate of thirty-five dollars a week — a respectable salary, indeed, and one that filled her with a sincere wish to give him the best work of which she was capable. She was used to receiving better wages than the ordinary worker, on account of the temporary positions which she filled so frequently, and had often received as high as twenty-five dollars a day when court was in session. Until quite recently Margaret had been rather indifferent to money, but the distress through which she had just passed, and the fear that she might not be able to provide for her mother as she would want to, had alarmed her so that she looked

upon this sum as a tangible God-send. She thanked Him sincerely that He had relieved her of this worry, and then went down to her mother's room.

"I am so glad, dearest, that I have the promise of steady employment now," she said, as she kissed her tenderly. "It has come just in the nick of time. And Mr. Van Deever has paid me a month's salary in advance. Mother, you can have whatever you want, and I'll be able to pay some of the bills beside. Isn't this great good fortune?" she continued, as she proceeded to tuck the bank-notes securely into her mother's purse. She was so full of happiness that she did not notice Mrs. Redmond's silence, until, turning, she was positively shocked to see the tears running down her cheeks.

"What is the matter, dearest?" she said, falling on her knees beside the bed.

"I don't know," said the mother, feebly. "But — I don't trust that young man, Margaret."

"Oh!" said Margaret, blushing hotly. "But let me explain," and then she related her entire morning's experience, omitting nothing, from the moment she entered the elevator with Mr. Jenkins, to her return home with her new employer.

"I noticed you did not take kindly to Mr. Van Deever," she went on, "and I did not care for him, either. But he was so kind and so sympathetic that he compelled my respect. I am sure God sent this position in answer to our prayers."

Mrs. Redmond dared not reveal to Margaret the true cause of her fears and antipathy. She tenderly

kissed the girl now, who was downhearted because she saw that her words had not relieved her mother's mind.

"Everything will be right, my child," she said, in a reassuring tone. "Calm yourself, and do as you think best. Your dinner is waiting — do not let it get cold. I have the fullest confidence in you and your divine Protectors."

Genevieve was surprised to see the tears in her friend's eyes when she entered the dining-room.

"Well, now, you're a fine American beauty!" she scolded. "What is the matter? Do you think your mother is worse?"

Margaret shook her head and wiped the tears from her cheeks.

"Well, then! What in the world ails you?"

"I am afraid mother is dissatisfied," she said. She went on to relate for the second time her morning's experience. "I don't know what she is afraid of, Genevieve. Tell me confidently, now, your opinion of Mr. Van Deever."

Genevieve's instant response was consoling and encouraging.

"Why, Margaret," she said, "I honestly think you are in great luck. He is a fine fellow, and positively the most resourceful I've ever met. And no doubt your mother's illness accounts for her aversion to him. It is true that his religious teaching has been sadly neglected," she went on, and a low laugh burst from her as she thought of the amusing incident of the pictures, "but I feel confident that he will soon remedy this."

Margaret herself was forced to join in the laughter of her friend — Van Deever's mistake had seemed so ludicrous.

"If I were you I'd set my cap for him," said Genevieve, roguishly. "You have the opportunity — he is already head over heels in love with you. If something doesn't happen within the next few months, I fear that the petals of those roses of his will wither in vain."

"His roses!" gasped Margaret now, in surprise. "How in the world —"

Genevieve made no reply. With a nod of superior wisdom, she went to the telephone in the corner of the room, and calling up Meyer & Son, inquired whether Webster Van Deever had yet paid for the roses delivered to Miss Margaret Redmond, in the Equitable Building, the previous morning. She then held the receiver to Margaret's ears.

"Not yet," came back the answer; "we only mailed the bill to his office to-day."

"Thank you," said Genevieve, coolly, who had also heard the reply. "There, now!" she exclaimed. "Am I not a good detective?"

And then the girls sat down to the dinner-table and laughed so heartily and so long that Mrs. Redmond felt a little relief. Margaret could not laugh like that if there were even a suspicion of trouble.

"Instead of a detective, you're turning fortune-teller," laughed Margaret, wiping the tears of mirth from her eyes. "And now, Genevieve, will you really be able to stay with us until mother gets bet-

ter? I need you more than ever since my work promises to take up so much of my time."

"Gladly," said Genevieve, "if you will promise to bring Mr. Van Deever here with you just as often as you decently can. Mother will have no objection to my remaining — she has four other daughters and five big sons to worry her. I just went to the store over the holidays, so I'll gladly stay with you for a while and take care of your mother, while you prove yourself a good breadwinner, and also provide entertainment for me. And by the way," looking at her watch, "it is nearly one o'clock. You had better hurry back to the office, or you may have to return some of the advance salary you received. I'll call up the folks at home and tell them I mean to remain here on my errand of mercy."

When Margaret tiptoed in and kissed her mother a few seconds later, Mrs. Redmond had dozed off, but when Genevieve entered with her broth soon after she had roused again, and turned to the good-hearted girl with some emotion.

"O, Genevieve, I am so anxious!" she said. "The very name of that man makes me shudder! I fear for my Margaret, who will be with him constantly."

Genevieve attributed this language to fancy.

"Why, that's nonsense, Mrs. Redmond," she said, endeavoring to soothe her. "He strikes me as being pretty honorable, and besides Margaret is clever and well able to take care of herself."

"My dear girl, the Van Deevers have the cunning

of the serpent with the apparent simplicity of the dove."

"He isn't a Catholic," said the girl, in a less assured tone, "but he is well-disposed, for he borrowed the family Bible."

"O, Genevieve, you do not know how anxious I am," persisted Mrs. Redmond. The thought of a Van Deever reading the Scriptures did not appease her.

"But you have no grounds for your anxiety!" said Genevieve. "Instead, you should thank God that Margaret has been so fortunate."

"I will tell you why I am anxious," said the mother, in a pained tone, "if you will promise to help Margaret when you can, and in the meantime, while she is employed by these people, keep the matter from her."

"I will indeed," said Genevieve, heartily. "I love Margaret as if she were my own sister and I would do anything in the world for her."

"It is only natural for a mother to love and fear for her dear child," said Mrs. Redmond, "especially her only one. She is the only one I ever had, Genevieve, and was sent to Philip and me after twelve long years of fervent prayer that God would bless us with children. I consecrated her to the Sacred Heart, and called her after Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. I have tried so hard to keep her from even the suspicion of harm, and while her father lived it was easy. You do not know the cause of his financial ruin. He

was very successful until the terrible panic. Even then he would have weathered the storm, as he often told me, had he not borrowed a sum of money from Homer Van Deever of New York, through a certain Mr. Jenkins, his local agent. Those unscrupulous men foreclosed on him in a critical moment, leaving him and his family almost paupers, and took complete possession of the business which he had created after long years of patient toil. The blow that killed Philip Redmond established the firm of Van Deever & Co. in Chicago. You see now, that Margaret, my poor darling, has her head in the lion's mouth."

Genevieve was deeply moved by this. She sat silently beside Mrs. Redmond, patting her hand in sympathy, while the tears of sorrow for the past and dread for the future wet the poor woman's pillow.

CHAPTER VII

ANDY'S EXPLANATION

INSTEAD of spending his evenings at the club, the theater, or other places of amusement, it was remarked by his friends that Webster Van Deever had become very fond of the home on Jackson Boulevard since his recent trip to the coast. Some attributed this change of daily habits to the press of business, which seemed to absorb all of his attention, while others, who thought they understood him better, wrongly suspected that he did not find society congenial in the metropolis of the West. Even Andy, seeing the change in his master's habits, had begun to fear that there was something wrong. In his solicitude he would linger at the door every evening after receiving his orders for the next day, until he was reassured by some genial remark that all was still well.

As he entered his master's apartments one evening later than usual, he found Van Deever absorbed in a large volume that lay on the table.

"I'll give you a five dollar note, Andy," said the young man, looking up with a pleasant smile, "if you can guess what I am reading."

"And how can I guess what a smart man like you would be reading?" asked Andy, brightening at the challenge. "You know more books by heart than I

know by name. Would it be asking too much if you could tell me what it's about?"

"O Andy, you're a schemer!" said Van Deever, with a twinkle in his eye. "But," he added, after a moment's hesitation, "I think I am pretty safe in saying that it treats of religion."

"When I was a boy," said Andy, "there was Butler's Catechism, the Sincere Christian, and the Bible — those were the books in every Catholic home. Of course many religious and more irreligious books have been printed since then, but I'm sure you're too honest and good-hearted to be going into one of the latter. I will, therefore, try to win that five dollar note by saying you're reading the Bible." And as Andy finished he beamed at the young man triumphantly.

"Caught!" said Webster Van Deever, as he slipped his hand into his pocket, and gave the old man a greenback, evidently as well-pleased by Andy's remarks as by the fact that he was caught studying religion.

"Thank you, Mr. Van Deever," said Andy, bowing politely as he pocketed the money. "If you had credited yourself with some of the goodness others observe in you maybe you'd be five dollars richer this minute!" And then both servant and master joined in a hearty laugh.

"All right, Andy. But now you just sit down there. I want to ask you a few questions."

"With pleasure," said Andy, nothing loth indeed, taking the seat the young man indicated.

"Now, what do *you* think the Bible contains?"

"The holy word of God," said Andy, with decision.

"But, Andy," said Van Deever, "how can God, who is a spirit, speak in human words?"

"Words stand for ideas," explained Andy, "and surely God has these in abundance. Why wouldn't He make them known to us?"

"Yes, Andy — but He hasn't a tongue to speak words, nor hands to write them," said Van Deever, "so how can He impart them to us?"

"Many a time I've puzzled over that," said Andy, "but it was never clear to me until Father Morrin himself explained it. 'He who made us can put His own ideas directly into our minds. If He prefers He can cause His words to be perceived by human ears or recorded the same as He did the condemnation of Baltassar on the wall of his palace.'"

Webster Van Deever had been meditating seriously on religious matters. He longed for light, though his ideas of the nature and economy of God's works were still very hazy. But now that Andy made the first of his difficulties so clear he placed others before him.

"And is every idea God communicated to man in the Bible?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" said Andy. "There's the private message, and the public message of God. The first God still communicates to His children; the public closed with the Apocalypse of St. John."

"And then I'm to suppose that *all* His public message is in this book?" asked Van Deever, laying his hand on the volume before him.

"Not even that," explained Andy. "Much of that comes down to us by tradition."

"Tradition! Mere hearsay!" cried Van Deever, in surprise.

"The belief and teaching of succeeding ages," explained Andy. And as Van Deever looked incredulous he went on. "Adam wasn't a young man when he died. He lived to see his children to the eighth generation, and often held Lamech, the father of Noe, on his knee. The same was true of Noe, who saw his children to the ninth generation, and died only when Abraham brought the sacred traditions with him to Palestine. Under such circumstances the word of God was easily preserved from corruption."

"That is true," said Van Deever, thoughtfully, "but we have another difficulty — how did God, later on, inspire His prophets to record His word?"

"That was explained in the last Lenten course by Father Morrin," said Andy. "If He found the idea already in the minds He seized upon it; or, if it was not there, He put it first into the mind of the writer, and then moved him to record His message faithfully, even suggesting the words that were necessary to convey His meaning. Much the same, said Father Morrin, as a mother might do with her little one, who would write a letter to its absent father. She first tells the little one to write, and then, from time to time, what to write, and after a little, the very words to write that will express the idea she wishes to convey."

"Father Morrin must be a clever man," said Van Deever. "That is a good way to put it. And yet how can we have, to-day, any certainty that the Bible is the pure word of God? That it has not been cor-

rupted by the ignorance and malice of man? That it has not even been changed by copyists and translators?"

"The Jewish priesthood and the olden prophets watched over the word of God with great jealousy," replied Andy. "In the New Law the Saviour made His Church an infallible teacher in matters of faith and morals, by delegating her to act in His name, and by giving her the unerring guidance of the Holy Ghost."

"That's a nice theory, Andy," protested Van Deever, "but you know there are hundreds of churches in the world to-day."

"You are right," admitted Andy. "There is one divine original, as plain to be seen as a city built on a mountain, and there are hundreds of human counterfeits."

"And how can I tell the one from the hundreds?"

"By the trademark, which has been patented in heaven," said Andy, quaintly. "The true Church is one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic. She is the same the world over in faith and in practice, raising up all of good will to the dignity of children of God. She can prove to any jury in the land that she, and she alone, came down from the days of Christ and holds fast to all the teachings of the Apostles. Since the days of St. Peter she has had the power of miracles, and she has, so far, fulfilled the prophecy of her divine Founder that the gates of hell will never prevail against her. Because of her divine nature and commission, St. Paul exhorted the faithful of his day, to

'beware of imitations,' and he actually damned the innovators for corrupting the faith of Christ."

Andy had warmed to the subject which he loved with all his heart; he spoke with so much fervor and conviction that he made a great impression on Van Deever. This opened a new vista of thought to him, indicating the way to truth so clearly that he could not but feel contempt for the godless system in which he had been educated.

"I must admit," he reflected, "that this poor man, with no advantage in the world, is better informed than I with all my wealth and training."

"You mustn't be surprised at my ignorance of religious matters," he said, with great humility. "These things were never discussed, Andy, either at the University or at home. I feel like the treasurer of the queen of the Ethiopians, of whom I was reading when you came in. And you have acted the part of Philip to me."

"Oh, you poor orphan!" exclaimed Andy, with deep feeling, while a tear stole down his withered cheek.

"There are two things I can't see through," said Van Deever. "Miracles are evidently impossible — and I can't see how I share in the sin of Adam, who lived and died so many years ago."

"Father Morrin could surely explain those," said Andy, hesitatingly. "But I've heard that this universe is like a clock, which the Creator has wound up till the day of doom. Now, as a clockmaker can interfere with the work he has made, so God, for the

benefit of religion, may, and does at times, suspend the laws of nature — thereby placing His seal, as it were, on His divine work."

"That isn't a bad explanation," remarked Van Deever, "but it is pretty generally admitted to-day that the age of miracles is past."

"Not by people that have eyes to see and ears to hear," said Andy, with decision. "Have you never heard of the miracles at Lourdes and other favored places, that even infidel doctors acknowledge and accept?"

"I took it all for rank fanaticism," said Webster Van Deever.

"With Adam," pursued Andy, after a few minutes of silence, "it was as with the head of any family. By dissipation and neglect of business, even a millionaire may make himself and his family paupers. So Adam gambled away the prerogatives of a child of God to please Mother Eve. As a result of his dissipation, we come into the world spiritual paupers — though with sin we gained the privilege of wearing clothes. And this privilege costs some of us a good deal," concluded Andy, laughingly.

"So you believe that mankind did not wear clothes before sin came into the world?"

"Exactly," said Andy, rising to depart. "God created Adam and Eve in original justice and holiness, placing them in the paradise of pleasure. After they had eaten of the forbidden fruit, they discovered that they were naked, and proceeded to clothe themselves." said Andy, and concluding his remarks with another genial laugh he left the room.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OFFICE

IT is indeed marvelous to contemplate the influence of woman over her surroundings. This was especially true at the Van Deever office, where, of the entire staff of fifteen persons, only the stenographer was a woman. Miss Long had gone West in a spirit of adventure, though partially in the hope of eventually marrying Mr. Jenkins. She had accompanied this trusted agent of Homer Van Deever to Chicago, and had held the position of stenographer since the reorganization of the Redmond office. She was a tall girl, of the blonde type, about twenty-five years old, whose chief anxiety was not to appear a day older than she could help. As a child, Miss Long had been allowed to grow up as she pleased. Her whole moral training, if such it could be called, consisted in listening to the general principles of right and wrong — inculcated periodically by a worldly-minded mother, who invariably taught her child more by word than example — and in assisting annually at some Sunday-school from Thanksgiving until Christmas.

Miss Long had never been baptized and had never received even the most rudimentary instruction in positive religion, her parents maintaining, so wise were they in their ignorance and conceit, that in a matter of

such importance as being liberated from the dominion of Satan, and acquiring title to a mansion in heaven, their child must be permitted to choose for herself! So Miss Long, grown to young womanhood, never learned the necessity and the utility of prayer — and had no aspiration beyond this fleeting life. Her parents obtained a divorce while she was quite young and later on, when both married again, she found no welcome in either home. She earned her own way for a time, and finally through the influence of a friend secured a position in the New York office of the Van Deever firm.

The principles that actuated this young lady in her daily conduct were as simple in their philosophy as they were complex in their modes of application. They were two in number — the first, for every-day use, was of a decidedly positive nature. The other, to which she had recourse only in an emergency, was merely negative. Both may be briefly formulated as follows:

1. Get all the good you can out of life, with the least amount of exertion.

2. Do not get *caught* in any dishonorable action.

These principles Miss Long applied with an energy that was worthy of a nobler cause. She looked to her ease, comfort, and pleasure first, by living and dressing as the latest fashions and fads suggested, wearing always an abundance of such personal adornments as would attract the attention of men. It was her daily task to ingratiate herself into Mr. Jenkins' favor, especially when he was in charge of the office, and when

young Mr. Van Deever took the helm, she showed him the same marked deference. In return Mr. Jenkins made her his confidant in many affairs of minor importance, and frequently availed himself of her services to spy on his subordinates. To her chagrin, Mr. Webster Van Deever despised her. He certainly seemed to treat her with as much coldness and reserve as he was, to his great alarm, soon to observe in the conduct of Miss Redmond toward himself.

At first Miss Long sought to reap daily tribute by making the men in the office her admirers, and indeed managed to enjoy candy, flowers, and theater tickets at their expense for a short while. But when they learned of her secret collusions with Mr. Jenkins, they soon extended to her the same distant formality with which they invariably treated their detested superior.

Miss Long retaliated bravely, showing her spite by many petty annoyances, which often strained business decorum to such extremes that it took all the restraining influence of Mr. Jenkins' somber visage to prevent an outbreak. Apparently for no other reason than that they had not yet arrived at man's estate, Miss Long treated the two office boys with positive aversion, and tantalized them in many ways in the discharge of their routine duties. They despised her, and annoyed her in every possible manner, and by them Miss Long was referred to disrespectfully as "the yellow cat."

Under these circumstances the appearance of Margaret Redmond at the Van Deever office was like sunshine after a storm. From the beginning Margaret

resolved to establish a reputation for pleasantness, reserve, and strict attention to business. She easily sustained her reputation as a clever worker, and also as a loving child of God — which was of infinitely more value in her eyes. For the first, Webster Van Deever paid her well; but for the latter she laid up treasures in the kingdom of heaven.

Devoting herself to her task with that resolute energy and concentration which distinguished all her actions, she dispatched more work in her quiet way than two ordinary clerks, and soon brought order into Miss Long's department. Her influence, besides, was stimulating, elevating, and refining. The clerks were accustomed to work only because they were paid for their work, and they were inclined to avail themselves of the temporary absence of the officials in charge to idle away their time. Miss Redmond, on the contrary, seemed to take a positive pleasure in her duties, and at no time showed any inclination to shirk them. She was gracious, kind and attentive, yet still so modest and so reserved that she not only commanded respect but even won the regard of those with whom she came in contact.

"She is a wonder," said Bartholomew, the secretary, one day.

"A gold mine!" admitted Jenkins.

If Margaret's personality exercised such an influence on the clerks, Webster Van Deever fancied himself rapt to the third heaven whenever he approached her. Her voice was sweetest music, her glance an inspiration, her very presence intoxicating. From an

imperious, irascible young despot, Van Deever was gradually transformed into an amiable "head," who was soon idolized by the very subordinates who formerly had gambled on the number of times he would lose his temper during office hours.

"What's come over the boss?" asked the youngest office-boy one day.

"Where's your eyes? Can't you see he's sweet on the new stenographer?" was the other's reply, showing that even the most insignificant among them had begun to appreciate the state of affairs.

If Van Deever was inclined to show some thought and consideration toward the least of his clerks, he felt that he could never show his appreciation of Margaret Redmond. He took the greatest pleasure in answering all her questions, instead of referring her to Mr. Bartholomew, the secretary. Twice a day he 'phoned to Miss Harty, inquiring for Mrs. Redmond, and regularly ordered fresh flowers for the sick-room. Often at noon he intercepted the girl and begged her to allow him to take her home in his machine; and on several occasions he called for her on the way back. On these occasions he availed himself of the opportunity to exchange a few pleasant words with Genevieve, in the hope of furthering his cause, and always had kind wishes to be communicated to Mrs. Redmond. Without being presumptive, Van Deever did everything in his power to break through the reserve in which Margaret Redmond hid herself. But Margaret steadfastly and politely refused all favors. Though she might have enjoyed the relaxation, she in-

variably declined Van Deever's urgent requests to accompany him to the theater, the opera, and other places of amusement. Now she pleaded urgent home work, now fatigue, again her mother's illness. A less prudent girl might have considered it opportunity lost to refuse so many respectful overtures. Many young girls have accepted favors of this sort to their everlasting sorrow. Margaret knew little of the actual wickedness of the world, but she was always true to her God, her Church, and her better self. Soon it was remarked that Margaret Redmond had a mind of her own, and opinions of her own, that she was modest and prudent, gentle, sweet-tempered, and firm, and above all true to principle.

An example of this was shown one morning when Miss Redmond entered the office a little later than usual. A slight titter went around, when, on taking off her hat, they caught a glimpse of her forehead. There, startlingly prominent because of the clear and sanitary whiteness of her skin, was a blotch of soot or ashes.

Van Deever was anxious to spare her mortification, and yet he did not like to speak of the blemish outright. He gazed at her fixedly several times, and when he saw he had attracted her attention, he rubbed his own forehead vigorously.

Margaret smiled, and her blue eyes danced merrily, as she said, aloud:

"I know all about it, Mr. Van Deever. Those are the blessed ashes I received at church this morning."

Van Deever stared at her in bewilderment, and

there was a moment of silence in the office that served as a general question.

"Why, this is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the holy season of Lent," said Margaret. "The day on which we Catholics receive these ashes to remind us that we are dust and unto dust we must return."

"What a beautiful ceremony!" stammered Van Deever. He looked at her an instant longer somewhat blankly, and then turned on his heel and went into his private office.

"I say, Bartholomew, these Catholics are a strange people!" said Jenkins, sneeringly.

"No doubt about it, no doubt about it!" assented the secretary, nodding.

CHAPTER IX

A SECOND RESOLVE

VAN DEEVER seated himself at his desk, and was soon lost in deep thought.

"How could she say a thing of that sort?" he asked himself, impatiently. A few months before he would have scorned the idea that any sane woman of twenty-two, accomplished and lovely, could possibly take any pleasure in the thought that she was "dust, and unto dust must needs return!"

Yet Margaret Redmond was quite sane, indeed; unquestionably lovely, unquestionably talented — and she could look with complacency on the fact that her pretty, rounded form, her smiling red lips, her dimpled hands, her smooth cheeks, her large blue eyes would one day molder into dust! Was it not dreadful thus to stand in contemplation beside one's own grave, as it were, in spirit to observe the process of one's own corruption? Van Deever shuddered in horror.

Is not youth filled with the love of life, the desire of admiration, the anticipation of many years of happiness to come? Is not youth the harvest-time of joy?

Yet here was Margaret, young and happy, perfectly indifferent to the views of ordinary mortals, reflecting calmly, almost fondly, on the dreadful truth that one day she must die and bid farewell to this glorious

world, and all the things she held most dear! The other young girls he had met would grow pale and sicken at the very suggestion of their death. Yet she could truthfully repeat the words which he had heard without comprehending: "O Grave, where is thy victory? O Death, where is thy sting?" How could she do it? And solemnly came the answer from his own awakened inner consciousness:

"She does not fear death because she is a child of God." And then came Andy's definition: "She does not fear death because she appreciates the goodness of God, and seeks to please Him in all things. As long as she is with God and God with her, she can afford to be indifferent to material and temporal things."

And then he sighed as he contemplated the dreary prospect of ever being able permanently to enter her life.

"Now I understand," he mused, "the reason of her reserve toward me. I was prepared to take up Christianity as a philosophical study. I did not realize until now that Christianity means a radical change in my life, my thoughts, my whole outlook! 'This is a hard doctrine — who can bear it?' No wonder the disciples at Capharnaum said those words. I feel as they did."

Webster Van Deever was worldly, and Christ says the world has nothing in common with Him. He was proud of his wealth, and Christ says it is difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. He was ambitious, and Christ demands that he seek the

glory of God in all things. He was self-willed, and Christ declares that the test of a true child of God lies in the keeping of His commandments.

What commandments? Weary of this constant self-communing, Webster Van Deever felt that he hardly cared to know. He valued his liberty too highly to see it limited — even by the Almighty. "And still," as a sudden solemn thought struck home: "one can not live forever. One must enter eternity. An eternity of heaven or of hell. There is no alternative — and out of hell there is no redemption."

All that he had discovered of the teachings of the Catholic Church so far seemed reasonable, and Margaret's daily life furnished an ever-present example that her faith was credible, her religion divine. It made her a living, loving child of God.

He then went over his past conduct toward the girl and his present standing with her. Thus far he had sympathized with her in her difficulties. She had shown herself deeply grateful. He had flattered her. She had seemed indifferent to all compliments. He had invited her repeatedly to accompany him to various places of amusement, and she had invariably declined, as she also declined, gratefully, but firmly, any gift he sought to bestow on her. She had never repulsed him. She had not shown that she disliked him in any way — in fact, he imagined she did like him considerably, but he could not break through the wall of reserve which stood between them. What was he to do? Renounce the hope of winning her? A thousand times no! His whole nature rebelled at the very

idea. He was not worthy of her if he made no sacrifices for her. Life was not worth living without her. "After all," he thought, "religion has its compensations, even though it demands sacrifice. To be a willing child of God in this life means eternal happiness in the next, and perhaps the happiness of Margaret's companionship here below."

His heart leaped with happy anticipation.

"Yes," he resolved firmly, "I will follow where she leads. It's not a bad way. She will not accompany me to the theater, but I shall accompany her to church."

So, thinking she might extend the invitation to him, Webster Van Deever found a pretext for escorting Margaret Redmond home that evening. As they went he questioned her about the services, and asked whether she intended to go later on. Whether Margaret failed to divine his purpose or intentionally ignored it, there is no telling. At any rate Webster Van Deever went home disappointed. But he was not to be easily turned aside. His mind was now made up, and so he resolved to hear Father Morrin preach that night — the priest of whom Andy had told him so much.

After dinner the young man summoned his old servant, and looking at him in a quizzical way, asked gently:

"Were you at church this morning, Andy?"

This question caused Andy no little surprise.

"Why, yes, sir," he said. "I go every morning,

and I pray the rosary that our blessed Lady may keep you from all harm."

"Thank you, Andy. But who is this Lady who will keep me from all harm?"

"The blessed mother of God," answered Andy.

"Ah, Andy! The mother of God! Some time ago you told me that God is a spirit infinitely perfect, who has existed for all eternity."

"I did," said Andy, with ardor. "But the Son of God assumed human nature of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and died upon the cross to save us from sin and hell."

"There is, then, God eternal — the mother of God — God the Son — the heavenly Father — the Virgin Mary — the Holy Ghost!" Van Deever smiled. "Are there more in the heavenly family, Andy?"

"Oh, my, but it's hard to put sense into a learned head!" said Andy. "God is one in nature, but three in person, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. After Adam brought sin into the world and forfeited the privileges of a child of God, the Son of God became man to lead us back again to the dignity of children of God. Didn't you read all that in the Bible? Perhaps you'd better take my Catechism; it contains the truth without the trimmings."

"Maybe I read it, but I certainly didn't understand it," said Van Deever. "Even now I can't understand how the Son of God became a creature."

"He added a perfect human nature to His divine nature without ceasing to be God — and in that hu-

man nature He did penance for our sins, and became our Mediator with the heavenly Father. You would not cease to be a human being if you were to grow wings, and thus have the additional nature of a bird."

"I see," said Van Deever. "But why don't you pray directly to God?"

"I can remember you quite distinctly as a little lad, Mr. Webster, clinging to your mother's skirts and asking her to explain to your father when you were particularly anxious to get something. That's why we go to the Mother of Jesus and ask her to present our petition to Him, and add the weight of her own influence to it."

"But don't you think, Andy, that's making too much of the Mother and thereby slighting the Almighty?"

"No, sir, I don't. The Almighty didn't seem to think so when He made Mary so perfect that she was fit to become the Mother of the Son. If you had the making of your own mother wouldn't you want her to be beautiful of soul and body? And Jesus had the advantage over us of creating His own Mother. Should we wonder that He made her according to His mind's ideal and His heart's most cherished affection?"

"That is but natural, Andy."

"'Our tainted nature's solitary boast,' Father Morrin says one of the poets calls her. You wouldn't grow hurt or slighted or jealous if others thought well of your mother? You'd be proud. So we think that all honor bestowed on Mary is glory given to her Son.

God became man through Mary, and if man wants to go to God, says Father Morrin, he must be led by the hand of this spiritual mother."

"That explains matters to me," said Van Deever, heartily. "But, by the way, Andy, what kind of a man is Father Morrin?"

"Father Morrin?" Andy smiled fondly. "Why, he's a laughing little man, with curly gray hair and a shabby, green suit of clothes. He gives to every beggar he meets and borrows more to pay poor people's rent. On account of this extravagance he often hasn't a shirt to his back, and his trim little sister, who keeps house for him, is hard put to it to stretch five cents the length of a dollar bill to get him something to eat. I don't think he's what they call an orator, but he instructs and interests. He has a good head, ripe experience, and a sympathetic heart."

"I would like to see and hear that man, Andy," said Van Deever. "Will you promise not to speak of it to any one if I go to church with you this evening?"

For a moment Andy O'Regan could not conceal the joy that filled his honest old heart.

"Glory be to God, that I have lived to see this day!" he exclaimed with fervor. "My prayer is heard, for if you go to hear Father Morrin once, you will certainly go again. Thanks be to Thee, O Lord!"

CHAPTER X

ASH WEDNESDAY NIGHT

ON their way to the Church of the Good Shepherd, Andy endeavored to instruct his master as best he could in the requirements of Catholic etiquette.

"When some children of the world enter the house of God," he said, "they are about as much at home as an Indian in a parlor. They will perch on a seat like an owl on the limb of a tree, and not even bend the knee in the presence of their Lord and Master. Now I know, Mr. Van Deever, you wouldn't want to annoy any one — you're too much of a gentleman for that.

"On entering the church dip the tips of the fingers of your right hand in the holy water, which is kept in a font near the door, and sprinkle yourself with it. Then follow me up the aisle to my pew, where you can hear the sermon. When we get to the pew, and before going into it, we will genuflect — that is, touch the floor with the right knee, just as you do sometimes when you go through your calisthenic exercises. You then go into the pew, and kneel on both knees for a few moments, keeping your hands folded. After that do just as you see the people in front of you doing."

"Thank you, Andy. I'll do as you tell me," said Van Deever.

The church was crowded and services had already begun when Andy ushered his master into the pew. After the recitation of the Rosary, and the singing of the *Veni Creator,* Father Morrin ascended the pulpit, signed himself with the sign of the cross, and spoke as follows:

"My dearly beloved children.

"We live in an age where the flesh, the world, and the devil have conspired to dethrone the Almighty, and to exalt man's sensual nature in His stead. To attain this end the fountains of truth are corrupted, the facts of history perverted, and the questionable pleasures of this fleeting life are lauded as the object and legitimate end of all human ambition. The lodges of secret societies have foisted a godless education on the nation, dispensed its inhabitants from the Ten Commandments, and decreed that the Almighty does not exist, or, if He still survives, that He has no claim for which He can seek redress in any court of the land.

"Living in the very midst of a wicked world, you see its maxims applauded in the daily papers, proclaimed from sensational pulpits, and applied in the private lives of your neighbors, in the public schools and universities, and even in the sacred halls of justice. Alas! there are even members of the true fold, dead branches on the tree of life, on whom the holy waters of baptism seem scarcely to have made a momentary impression. They are proud as Lucifer, sensual as Dives, and avaricious as Judas Iscariot. But, thanks be to God! the abomination of desolation has not yet

entered the holy place. The time has therefore not yet arrived when we must fly to the mountains to hide ourselves from the wrath to come. The earth is still full of God's mercy. For the Lord does not wish the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live.

"Let us, therefore, not merely take heed lest we fall, but let us, during this holy season of Lent, enter into ourselves, chastise our bodies and bring them into subjection, discover the follies and wickedness of the world by meditating on the eternal truths, gird on the armor of God, take up the shield of faith, and fortify ourselves with the two-edged sword of prayer, that we may extinguish all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

"We are composed of body and soul. If we live according to the flesh, says St. Paul, we are carnal, but if we are led by the Spirit and by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh, we are the children of God indeed.

"The carnal man shirks the primary obligations of this transitory life, which are to labor and to suffer, courageously to bear the heats and the burdens of the day. He lives an animal life, and makes sensual gratifications the object of his existence. His mind is polluted and his heart corrupt. We need not wonder, then, that he surrounds himself with all the conveniences of ease, of comfort, and even of luxury; that he gratifies his eyes and ears at the theater and the opera, his stomach by wining and dining, and his basest instincts at promiscuous dances and in the vil-

est dens of dissipation. After the carnal man has once begun to worship at the shrine of self-love, he will readily lie and steal and even murder in order to gratify his selfish nature.

"When creating man God implanted in his nature a longing for the infinite, which He alone can fill. He, the eternal Truth, alone can satisfy the human mind. He, the Infinite Good, alone can fill the human heart. He alone, the reward exceeding great, can grant eternal rest at the end of our earthly pilgrimage. Heaven and earth will pass away, He said, but My word will not pass away. The carnal man is doomed to disappointment in time and in eternity. He tries to fill an infinite want by an indefinite gratification of the finite; and so his evil habits grow stronger and his wicked propensities increase, but his craving is never satisfied. The drunkard imagines his heaven to be a boundless ocean of intoxicants; but he is never satisfied, for he can not consume it. The miser pictures his heaven as a mountain of gold; but he is never content, for his purse is too small to contain it. The libertine's heaven is an endless indulgence in lustful pleasures; but he is soon brought to an early grave by the venom its transitory enjoyment conceals.

"In the next world the carnal man must reap what he has sown. Lucifer, for one inordinate desire, was cast into the pool of fire and brimstone, where he is consumed with remorse and yet not destroyed, where he must suffer an infinite torture. O what will be the lot of the carnal man when he rushes into that

place of destruction! All his inordinate desires will then testify against him. By his misspent life he has condemned himself to suffer an infinite torture, but, as he can not suffer a pain that is infinite in intensity, the fire that dieth not will torture him during an infinite or eternal duration.

"And who is the slave of the world but this same carnal man, glossed over with the refinement of conventional etiquette, which makes him, in the language of the Saviour, a hypocrite and a whitewashed sepulcher? The slave of the world is contemptuously ignorant of the sacred convictions and undying principles that flow from the eternal truths. He is a stranger to the generous, self-sacrificing motives of a child of God. His idea of perfect happiness is, after wallowing in the mire of carnal pleasure, to scale the heights of social and political influence, till he has reached the pinnacle of earthly ambition, and then to gorge himself with vain honors and ephemeral power. He is obsequious to the great, false to his equals, and tyrannical toward his inferiors. He is a moral coward, the slave of human respect, and an object of scorn to the vilest imps of perdition. Because he has thrown away the liberty of a child of God, they will confine him in the lowest prison of hell. There, as the Saviour says, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, like that of maniacs in a madhouse! When too late to repent, the slave of the world will there regret that he has squandered and dissipated or gambled away his birthright to the kingdom of heaven!

"This child of perdition is also the slave of Satan.

He is doubly so when he does the work of the devil, by imbuing others with his spirit and leading them by word and example to eternal destruction. The slaves of Satan have broken their baptismal vows and crucified their Redeemer anew! They have renounced Jesus Christ and all His works and graces, and sworn allegiance to the prince of darkness! But the time will come when He, who died for their salvation, will say to them, 'Verily, I know you not! Because you have denied Me before men I deny you before My Father who is in heaven! Be gone from Me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire! which was prepared from the beginning of the world, for the devil and his angels!' And how will the imps of hell gloat over them! as they mock and scorn, and taunt them with their folly forever and forever!

"Ah, my children, let us hearken to the pleading of the Saviour at the beginning of this holy season! 'Why, do you flee from Me,' He asks, 'for I have made you to My own image and likeness? I have destined you for the infinite joys of heaven! I have loved you with an everlasting love, and I have proven My love for you by a death of ignominy and shame! My child, give Me thy heart! Do not run after the fleeting pleasures of life: they are vain and will soon end. Lay up treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor the moth doth consume, where thieves do not break through and steal. Do not give your life to Satan! He hates you because you are the image of God, and because you are destined to wear the crown the devil has forfeited by his rebellion. But I love

you and desire to sanctify you, and My compassionate Heart yearns to receive a token of appreciation from you! Do penance, then. Take up your daily cross and follow Me. Walk on the narrow way that leads to life eternal, and I will be your reward exceeding great. Begin this moment. This is the acceptable time, this is the time of salvation!'

"Oh, my children, if we live with the Saviour in the wilderness of this world, and fortify ourselves with prayer, fasting, and almsdeeds, we shall triumph over all our enemies! We may then confidently look forward to the fulfilment of those promises wherein the Saviour says:

"'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"'Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.

"'Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

"'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.

"'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

"'Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.

"'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

"'Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

"When John the Baptist prepared the way of the

Lord, he baptized those in the waters of the Jordan that had seriously resolved to change their lives. When the prophet Jonas preached repentance to the inhabitants of Ninive, the people did penance in sackcloth and ashes. So I call on all to-night that earnestly desire to become the true children of God, to receive the blessed ashes at the conclusion of the service, as a profession of true repentance. Without the conversion of the heart the reception of the blessed ashes would be an idle ceremony, if not a mockery and a sacrilege. Let those, therefore, who will not break with their evil habits, stay away from the railing, lest God strike them dead as He did Ananias and Saphira.

"May the blessing of the Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, descend upon you and remain with you forever. Amen."

Words cannot describe the feeling of awe and reverence that thrilled the heart of Webster Van Deever during the evening services. The sermon impressed him deeply; the touching beauty of the Benediction, and the recollected demeanor of the faithful about him stirred him profoundly. The words of Father Morrin moved him to the prayer of Bartimeus, the blind beggar. "Lord, that I may see!" And when, at the conclusion of the devotions, the faithful crowded to the communion railing, to be signed with the ashes of penance, he wished, with all his heart, that Margaret Redmond knelt beside him. How gladly would he receive upon his forehead that which he had thought

a blemish on hers — the impression of the sacred symbol! Yet what right had he, a stranger and an alien, to participate in so holy a ceremony!

Father Morrin was just signing the last of the faithful when he observed a well-dressed young man approach the railing rather timidly. As the venerable priest signed his forehead with the sign of the cross and murmured over him the solemn words reminding him of his last end: "Remember, man, that thou art dust and unto dust thou must return," Van Deever thrust a slip of paper into his hands.

"Please accept this, Father!" he whispered, pleadingly. "It will buy you a new suit of clothes!"

And before the astonished priest could make a reply, the stranger had disappeared in the crowd.

CHAPTER XI

THE LENTEN SEASON

WHEN Webster Van Deever left the church he bore a blotch of ashes on his forehead. Were Margaret Redmond at his side he would have cared little if the whole world had noticed it. But with poor Andy for his only companion his courage failed him as he gained the street, so he pulled his hat well down over his eyes, and walked along in silence. He did not speak until he had re-entered his home.

"I am glad I went with you this evening, Andy — it was an experience I am not likely to forget. Good-night."

Aside from the consciousness that he had drawn nearer to the girl of his heart by participation in the Ash Wednesday services, Van Deever could make no further progress. He spent the remainder of the week in the usual daily monotonous routine. In the meantime, however, he had formed his plans for another attempt to secure from Margaret an invitation to accompany her to church.

Immediately after the noon hour on Sunday, therefore, he inquired by telephone if she would be at home that afternoon, and begged leave to call. On being assured that she would be glad to see him, he resolved to return the family Bible. This would serve as a

pretext for conversation, in the course of which he hoped to lead up to the subject near his heart. It was true he had not finished all he would like to read, but, as Andy had shown him, the catechism was less confusing at the beginning of his religious studies. Moreover, he had taken but one step in the new way, and though he had really liked the services at the Church of the Good Shepherd, he was still inclined to go anywhere or nowhere, just as Margaret might influence him.

It was quite early when Van Deever stepped from his automobile in front of the Redmond residence, carrying the borrowed book with him. After being greeted cordially by Margaret and Genevieve, and inquiring after the health of Mrs. Redmond, he turned to Margaret, and said:

"Since you told me the other day that this is the season of Lent, Miss Redmond, I thought you might want to make use of your Bible. I thank you for letting me have it — I did not know when I borrowed it that it was a family heirloom."

"Oh, it is! And a precious one," said Margaret, as she took the volume tenderly in her hands and put it back in its place on the center table. "We have had it for the last hundred and fifty years. Our people were of the old Maryland settlers, and this is the only keepsake that has come down to us from them." She paused, with charming hesitation. "I would not take it from you only for that — but I have another, a smaller one, which I should be glad —"

"I could not accept a gift from you which did not

include the donor," said Van Deever, daringly, with a twinkle in his eye that caused Genevieve to smile and Margaret to blush vividly. "Besides," he continued, "I have told Andy to get me a Bible as near like that one of yours as he can. It will always remind me of my first visit to you, and I shall be able to peruse it at my leisure."

The visitor was thoroughly at his ease by this time, and so were the two girls, Margaret having regained her self-possession immediately, a little vexed at herself that she had lost it. During a lull in the conversation Van Deever remarked:

"I would like to have you both come for a ride in my new car. The weather is just nice for a spin through the park. Won't you come with me, please?"

Margaret looked a little embarrassed.

"I would not like to leave my mother alone the rest of the afternoon and this evening, too," she said. "If possible, I want to go to the Lenten services later on, and she might feel neglected. But," with a smile, "Genevieve has been in constant attendance here for six weeks now, and she must not miss a chance of this sort. She was saying that she had to go home some time this afternoon — perhaps you could go over to her house with her?"

Van Deever did not take kindly to this arrangement, and wished he had not spoken. He would be deprived of Margaret's companionship the whole afternoon — still he could not object, and expressed his delight at being able to convey Miss Harty wherever she cared

to go. Then Margaret, with a flash of her white teeth and the gleam of a dimple, repaid him for his sacrifice.

"If you return about five I shall give you both an early dinner, after which, if you survive, Mr. Van Deever, I will allow you to accompany Genevieve and myself to church."

His face beamed with pleasure.

"I was wondering how I could ask your permission to go with you," he began, but Margaret lifted her hand, laughingly.

"You must thank Genevieve. The cards were distributed last Sunday — here, by the way, is one of them — and our pastor urged us to bring some honest inquirer to the sermons. Genevieve insists you are that, so we'll be glad to have you with us."

Van Deever was very much delighted. He expressed his gratitude to Miss Harty for her kindness in remembering him, as he glanced over the card. This informed him that the Lenten sermons at St. Timothy's Church would be preached by the pastor, the Rev. Francis Ormsby Dinneen, D.D., on the following subjects:

Sunday, March 12, The Nature and Necessity of Religion.

Sunday, March 19, The True Religion as Ordained by God.

Sunday, March 26, Divine Faith the Teacher of the True Religion.

Sunday, April 2, An Honest Mind and the Gift of Faith.

Sunday, April 9, The Practical Good Will of a Child of God.

Sunday, April 16, Prayer, the Great Means of Obtaining and Preserving the Gift of Faith.

Holy Thursday, God's Greatest Gift to Man.

Good Friday, The Suffering of Jesus the Price of our Faith.

Easter Morning, The Resurrection of Christ the Foundation of our Faith.

Webster Van Deever read the card through several times.

"They look as if they might be very interesting," he said; then, as he put the piece of pasteboard in his pocket, "and I want to go with you, not only this evening, but every single evening."

In the meantime Genevieve had slipped on her coat and hat and now came back into the room, with a mischievous smile on her face.

"It is horrid of me to disturb you," she said. "But if we do not start, Mr. Van Deever, poor Margaret will never be able to get that dinner ready."

"Good by, Miss Margaret," said Van Deever, stifling a sigh. "Tender my respects to your mother when she awakes."

"Thank you, I will," said the girl, and stood nodding and smiling at the two from the window as they got into the machine. As soon as they were comforta-

bly seated, and the car started, Genevieve, whom our readers know by this time to be curious as well as roguish, turned to Van Deever with a gleam of merriment in her eyes.

"Now, tell me — have you ever in all your life met a sweeter girl than Margaret Redmond?"

"Never!" replied Van Deever, with such fervor that Genevieve laughed outright. "And you are just as nice in your own way," he added, with such directness that Genevieve was taken by surprise.

"Well, we're not much alike," she answered, "though we are the dearest and best of friends. I never cared much for books, and I hate to be caged up, but Margaret — well, Margaret would be a nun to-day if it weren't for her mother!"

"A nun!" cried Van Deever — and then when Genevieve explained what being a nun meant, he grew quite pale.

"That would be a positive crime!" he exclaimed. "To immure a girl, who can do so much good in the world, in a convent!"

He was disturbed and angry. He pulled his hat down over his eyes and for the next few moments devoted himself exclusively to the running of the car. Genevieve, smiling gleefully, for she had made the remark solely to discover the state of the young man's feelings, leaned back on the cushions, quite satisfied with results, and it must be confessed, rather enjoying his apparent misery.

During the rest of the drive he said nothing, and not until Genevieve came out of her own home

did he voice the thoughts that were in his mind.

"How does your Church regard the marriage of one of her members with an outsider?" he began, suddenly, as they left the Harty residence.

"Much the same as you would regard an investment without security," replied Genevieve.

"I don't quite understand," he said.

"Would you ever think of investing your entire fortune, for an indefinite period, without any security, Mr. Van Deever?" asked Genevieve, innocently.

"I certainly would not. That would be contrary to all rules of business, the height of folly."

"That's just the light in which Catholics view mixed marriages," said Genevieve.

"I understand the comparison," said Van Deever, "but I can't apply it."

"Well," said Genevieve, slowly, "in a business venture, there are three things — the principle, the interest, and various collateral advantages." Van Deever nodded. "It's just the same in matrimony. The principle is the life investment of body and soul in the married state. The interest is the love, fidelity, and devotion which every married person hopes to reap from the union. The collateral advantages are accidental, and mostly of a social and commercial value."

"Miss Harty, you ought to be a professor of social economy in the University!" cried Van Deever. "And yet, if you will pardon my dullness, I don't see how the marriage of which I spoke would be an investment without security."

"Do you want me to lecture you *ex cathedra?*"

"Pray do!"

"Well!" proceeded Genevieve, as she called an imaginary audience to order by tapping on the floor of the car with her umbrella, "in a mixed marriage the principle is jeopardized and often sacrificed by the evil of divorce, which hangs like a thunderbolt over every non-Catholic home, and often descends and shatters that home on the least provocation. It is said, I believe with authority, that here in Chicago there are over sixty-five thousand divorced and deserted women."

"I am emphatically opposed to divorce," said Van Deever.

"In theory, I suppose," said Genevieve, "but you know how many men and women of your social standing are figuring daily in divorce scandals! And I dare say that even the best of us, without the restraining influence of the Catholic faith, might consider it a convenient way of ending unhappiness. Unless one is enlightened by faith, and strengthened by the grace of God, one can hardly expect to be loyal in love, persevering in sacrifice, and faithful to duty when the day of adversity dawns. And even though the principle is not sacrificed by divorce, every Catholic entering a mixed marriage must expect to discount the interest, or relinquish her claim to it altogether."

"You surprise me, Miss Harty," said Van Deever, slowly.

"Most of our so-called liberal non-Catholics have discarded the Ten Commandments," said the girl, with

unexpected seriousness. "And what will teach them fidelity? Physical beauty fades, and the enchantment of earlier years is dispelled by the sober reality of later life. Natural love soon cools, and the woman of forty finds herself supplanted by a younger and more attractive rival."

"I am afraid you are right," agreed Webster Van Deever.

"I *know* I am," was the girl's response.

"But supposing the non-Catholic party is faithful?"

"Even then, how can there be a real union — since the one is a child of God and the other a mere human being? How can they be in sympathy if they don't honor God in the same way? It was mixed marriages that led, in the time of Noe, to loss of faith — and loss of faith to the Deluge, and the Deluge meant the extinction of the greater part of the human race. The Catholic party sacrifices religion either entirely or in part. In this way she or he loses far more than you would forfeit by sacrificing the interest on an investment."

"But a Catholic understands all this," said Van Deever.

"Imagine it! Imagine the lack of faith, the risk, the very presumption of a Catholic who would expect God's blessing on such a union, when she knows very well that His representative on earth, the Church, will not give her its blessing."

"And what about the non-Catholic in this case? What should he do?"

"I think he ought to investigate the claims of the

Church, if he is honest, and I am sure an impartial study will lead every honest inquirer of good-will to embrace the true religion for its own sake. On the other hand, if he is too careless to make any inquiries about her religion or to follow up the light vouchsafed him, he will certainly be too careless to make greater sacrifices for the girl's sake later on."

"You are right, and I thank you," said Van Deever, earnestly. "I am very ignorant of all religious matters. You see it is only by asking questions that I can hope for enlightenment."

After taking Genevieve a little further, he turned back toward Margaret's in good time for the excellent meal which the girl had in readiness. Later on he accompanied them to church, and listened with rapt attention to Dr. Dinneen's sermon. He was full of the subject when he returned home that night.

"Andy," he said, calling his faithful servant, "I was to church this evening with some friends, and the priest spoke about the nature and necessity of religion. I am anxious to read more about this. Where can I get some books?"

"I have a whole trunkful," was Andy's prompt reply.

"You?" exclaimed Van Deever.

"I have nearly every doctrinal and controversial book on the market, and a standing order with one of our big Catholic firms to send me anything of the kind as soon as it's printed."

"You take my breath away," said Van Deever.

"And in all these years you've never mentioned religion once to me!"

"There's a reason for that, too," said Andy. "When I entered your father's service twenty-six years ago, he was afraid I might try to make a Catholic of your mother, who is a naturally religious woman, God bless her! So he made me promise that, unless I were asked, I would never say a word about my faith to any member of his family."

"You've certainly kept your promise," said the young man.

"It was hard sometimes," said Andy. "Still, I could not help hoping that the master would relent, or question me by mistake. He never did, though I was always ready for him. I prayed for the chance day after day, but he never asked a single question. Lately I've been practicing on that slow-blooded Swede that works for the gentleman across the street. But now excuse me a minute, and I will see what I can find to interest you."

Presently Andy returned with books piled high on one arm. He deposited these on a chair, and proceeded to explain them.

"Here's one by the Abbé Ségur," he said. "I like it because it is clear, and because it is written by a saint. This is 'Catholic Belief.' It's a grand book, and is edited by Father Lambert, the priest who made Ingersoll famous. Here's the 'Question Box'— it's a mine of information. Here's 'Spiritual Pepper and Salt'— that's spicy enough, I'm sure. Here's another,

'Clearing the Way,' and this is 'The Faith of Our Fathers' by our own Cardinal Gibbons — he wrote it a good many years ago. And this is about the latest, 'A Theology for the Laity,' which gives the reason and authority of religion and clears up your doubts besides. I know them nearly all by heart, for I read them every night — I've used their arguments many a time."

"You're certainly a wonder, Andy," said Van Deever, with genuine admiration. "I never dreamed I was harboring such a genius. Now I want to go into this matter thoroughly, and will need your assistance and your prayers. I'll gladly give you the opportunity you've been looking for all these years, so I'm going to ask you to spare me an hour every evening that I do not go to church."

CHAPTER XII

A SERIOUS TEMPTATION

MARGARET REDMOND had frequently discussed the dispositions of Webster Van Deever with her friend before she finally yielded to Genevieve and permitted him to accompany them to the Lenten services.

"Your mother has evidently conceived an aversion for any one that bears the Van Deever name," said Genevieve to her on Shrove Tuesday, "on account of some unscrupulous business transactions in which the elder Van Deever took part while Webster was still in the University. It seems to me that the son should not be condemned for the sins of his father. If he is as honest and sincere as he appears to be, the Lenten course will do him good, and we will have an opportunity of putting his sincerity to the test without compromising you in any way."

But the young man was mounting high in Genevieve's esteem and gradually winning his way to Margaret's heart. The very first evening he surprised them not a little by taking holy water and genuflecting both on entering and leaving the sacred edifice, and after a few visits he seemed as familiar with Catholic practice as even the best-instructed of the faithful. Gradually, too, the conviction grew upon Margaret

that Genevieve was right after all — and that Webster Van Deever had been in love with her from the beginning. In fact, it taxed all her ingenuity to keep him from openly declaring his affection and devotion.

The anxiety about her mother, and the strain of her daily occupation, kept Margaret a long time from realizing that she was actually drifting into the whirlpool of a mixed marriage, or, at best, a marriage with a doubtful convert. The Good Friday sermon in particular caused her such qualms of conscience that she resolved to call on her director the following day and put the whole matter before him.

Accordingly she went in to see her pastor the next morning after services.

"You remember me, Father? I am Margaret Redmond."

"Yes, my child, I remember you."

"Well, Father, I've come in to have a little chat with you on a serious subject. I've been thinking of getting married."

"Oh," he said, "is that so? I think you mentioned several times to me that you felt called to the Religious State."

"Yes — I did feel that way, but —"

"Don't be rash, my child. God calls many to sanctify themselves in the world, but He leads His chosen ones to the convent. Whatever your vocation may be, your devout life has prepared you well for it. Take your time. God will show you the state He has destined for you."

"But, Father, that feeling of which I spoke, that

possible call to the Religious State has changed of late," said Margaret.

"And to what do you attribute the change? Solely to a chance acquaintance?" he asked. "Or have you relaxed in your devotions or your generosity toward God?"

"Perhaps you can best judge of that after I have told you all the circumstances of the past four months," said Margaret. She then proceeded to outline her acquaintanceship with Webster Van Deever from the time of the Charity Ball to the present hour. She mentioned her financial embarrassment, the help he had rendered her, and the excellent qualities and dispositions of her suitor.

Father Dinneen heard her patiently to the end. His face was troubled when she concluded.

"I am afraid there is a little delusion here," he said. "You are living in the proximate occasion of a mixed marriage."

"But he really seems to want to be a Catholic, Father. He has accompanied me to church every Sunday evening during Lent."

"He evidently respects and esteems you," said the pastor, after a moment's reflection. "Still, he may have accompanied you to church because you were too prudent to accompany him to the theater or dances or places more congenial to him."

"It is true, Father, that I have invariably refused to accept a single one of his many invitations, and I only consented to invite him to church in the hope of making a Catholic of him," confessed Margaret,

sincerely. "But during this time he has grown into my affections so strongly that I honestly fear I could not give him up."

"Be careful, my dear child!" said the pastor. "God loves His children too much to destine them for a mixed marriage. Human nature is inclined to regard as providential not only what is agreeable to its taste, but also the circumstances of its own contriving, of which it tries to shirk the responsibility. Knowing you as I do," he continued, gently, "I am positive that the circumstances here are not of your designing. But you know how our short-sighted ambition and the infirmity of our nature aid the evil one, who strives to frustrate God's intentions."

Margaret listened with anxiety and perturbation.

"As a precaution let me put before you what we may call the onesidedness of a mixed marriage. For the Catholic the sacred bonds of matrimony are dissolved only by death — for the non-Catholic any divorce court suffices. The Catholic swears fidelity in mind, heart, and daily life — the non-Catholic often has no conception of such obligations. The Catholic pledges her own soul for the salvation of the family — the non-Catholic often denies the soul's existence, the existence of God, or of the hereafter. So that the Catholic ideal of marriage is absolutely impossible without unity of mind and heart on the subject of religion."

"But, Father, this man acts toward me with the greatest courtesy. He is a true gentleman —"

Father Dinneen smiled.

"A true gentleman is a saint of God. And this man, who, a few months ago, denied the very existence of God, is a saint? Tell me, child, what might you be to-day if you had been reared as a mere mortal? As a human animal? without fear or love of God and His holy law? without any thought of the hereafter or hope of heaven? without the aid of prayer and the help of the Sacraments? surrounded by evil influences and with the germ of evil born in you? But you have had a thoroughly Catholic education and have enjoyed the influence of a Catholic home. Since your First Communion you have purified your conscience regularly in the Sacrament of Penance and strengthened yourself in grace by receiving the Giver of all grace. Your frequent confessions have sustained you in the spirit of humility and penance as well as in the desire of perfection. You are entirely too generous in crediting others with the same results without the elevating influence of the confessional and the sustaining influence of Holy Communion. As mere human beings mankind is the same the world over. To me the man or woman of the world, in the common acceptance of that term, the man or woman who pursues folly as the god of life, seems like a whited sepulcher."

"But the Church grants dispensations to marriages with men and women who are not Catholics," said Margaret, and there were tears in her eyes.

"You may force the Church to grant you a dispensation — and others have done so," said Father Dinneen. "But it will be no passport to heaven. Mixed marriages are unnatural for the children of

God, usually leading to loss of faith and thence to perdition. The Church tolerates what she can not prevent."

"Are there no reasons that would justify me in asking for such a dispensation?" persisted Margaret.

"Two honorable reasons justify a woman in asking such a dispensation without committing sin," explained Father Dinneen. "The one is advanced age, the other extreme poverty. The reasons usually advanced are, as a rule, in that category which St. Paul tells us ought not to be so much as mentioned among Christians. If it were not for mixed marriages and kindred evils we might have three times as large a Catholic population as we now have in the United States. Tell me, Margaret — what does your mother think of this young man?"

"Mother has an intense aversion for him on account of a prejudice against his father," returned the girl. As she spoke, the first impression Van Deever had made on her mother came before her mind, causing her deep distress. "Father, I don't know what to do!"

"At least don't sell your soul for a wealthy husband," returned Father Dinneen. Then, after a moment's silence, he continued: "My child, have you ever had cause to regret following my advice in the past?"

"Never!" said Margaret, with all sincerity.

"Then promise me to do, for six months longer, what I consider to be your Christian duty?"

"With all my heart and gladly, I promise that," said Margaret.

"Well, then," said Father Dinneen. "Remember the promise God made to those who keep the Fourth Commandment. Secondly, meditate on these words of the Holy Ghost 'He that loves the danger shall perish in it.' This proximate occasion of a marriage forbidden to Catholics has been necessary for the past three months. Perhaps you can make it a remote occasion by giving up your position. Thirdly, redouble your prayers and your vigilance that you may not be deceived by self-love, for this is the critical period of your life. Lastly, I think the time has arrived when you should put the sincerity of this young man to the test. It is easy for him to be devoted to you when things go smoothly, but in time of adversity the heart of man is tried like gold in the furnace. Pray that God may soon give you the occasion of such an infallible test. I will pray for this every day during holy Mass. If this young man is a sincere inquirer and becomes a Catholic after you have refused to associate with him — if he does not put the thought of you out of his mind even when he is away from you, we may safely say that he is sincere — and may be intended by God to become your partner in life. Make this test in a spirit of faith and out of obedience. God will not be outdone in generosity."

CHAPTER XIII

NICODEMUS

THE storm that usually follows the vernal equinox swept down upon Chicago in all its fury on Easter Monday. The leaden clouds that had gathered over the city on Good Friday, as if to mourn their Maker's death, increased instead of dispersing at the joyous peal of the Alleluia on Easter day. All day Sunday, the storm, like a frightful monster held in leash, threatened to break and wreak vengeance on a Christain people who had irritated it by their elaborate celebration of the joyous Resurrection festival. A fierce gale from the northeast finally set the elements at liberty. They broke forth in fury and deluged the streets of the city, shattering signboards, snapping telephone wires, uprooting trees, and spreading devastation everywhere.

A fierce wind was driving the rain in torrents against the parlor window of the little parochial residence adjoining the Church of the Good Shepherd, when the shrill peal of the bell suddenly announced a visitor. Father Morrin paused long enough in the recitation of his Office to say to his sister: "Will you see who is at the door?" and then hastened to finish Compline before the visitor could be announced.

"It's a terrible night for a sick-call," remarked

his sister in a worried tone, "and I don't see what else could bring any one out in such weather as this."

When she opened the door a well-dressed young man stepped into the hallway, umbrella in hand, and dripping with rain. He inquired rather shyly if he might see Father Morrin.

"Yes," said Miss Morrin, scrutinizing him closely, and then adding, somewhat nervously, "Is it a sick-call?"

"Oh, no!" replied the visitor. "I merely want to speak to him."

When Father Morrin entered his office a few moments later and greeted the young man he instantly recognized him.

"Well, I declare!" he said heartily, grasping both hands of the visitor warmly in his own. "I am very happy to meet you again, and to have the opportunity of thanking you for your generous donation. I appreciated it the more because it was entirely unexpected. But I've been rather curious to find out your name."

"I'd like to keep my name as well as this visit a secret, Father," returned Webster Van Deever, seating himself at Father Morrin's invitation. "And by the way," with an odd glance, "have you used the donation as suggested?"

This question embarrassed Father Morrin greatly, and he hemmed and hawed a little over the answer.

"Well . . . no . . . There was . . . You see, Mrs. Barry . . . she's a widow — she was sick and the children were in actual want, hon-

estly. And then Dolan — he hurt himself . . . and his wife borrowed twenty-five dollars. But I'm going to buy that suit of clothes out of my next salary."

Van Deever smiled, and slipped a tightly-folded slip of green paper into the good priest's hand.

"Don't wait, Father. You'll find enough here to do that." The more he saw of this fine man, the more Van Deever admired the self-sacrificing spirit which Andy had described so graphically. He was determined that he should at least possess a good suit of clothes.

More surprised and mystified than ever, Father Morrin drew a small rosary from his pocket.

"At least accept this in honor of Our Lady, as a slight token of my appreciation."

"I will gladly do that, Father," said Van Deever, sincerely, as he accepted the rosary and carefully slipped it into his pocket. He looked at the priest, then, very earnestly.

"Father. I want you to do me a great favor. I want to become a child of God."

"A what? Why? How? Aren't you a Catholic?" stammered Father Morrin, in surprise.

"No," confessed Webster Van Deever. "I was nothing until a few months ago, when a charming Catholic young lady gave me what I considered an insult, and, in fact, fairly scorched me with her contempt." He then went on to relate his experience and what had happened since.

"You've discovered the valiant woman lauded in

the Proverbs," said Father Morrin, chuckling with delight. "You know it was a sudden shaking up that brought the faith to St. Paul." Then, with a serious mien, he looked into the tall young man's face earnestly. "Tell me, my dear sir, do you want to be converted to God, or to this girl?"

"Now, Father!" cried Van Deever. "I came to you because I heard your serious sermon on Ash Wednesday, and you're making game of me!"

"Well," said Father Morrin, after both ceased laughing, "I have no patience with those prodigal sons who want to be converted to our pure Catholic girls! And it's an odd thing that these holy innocents are often proud of their conquests, and confidently expect to make saints of them later on! You are a stranger to me," said Father Morrin, with a keen and scrutinizing glance, "but I am glad to see that you do not belong to this class of degenerates."

"I'm thankful for the compliment — and I wish I could say the young lady was proud of me, Father," declared Van Deever, ruefully. "She treats me as one might treat a rattlesnake that has never had its fangs extracted."

"A prudent woman as well as a valiant one!" smiled Father Morrin. "That child of God evidently does not want to be classified among the foolish virgins. But let me ask you Mr. —, yes, let me ask you, sir, what do you know about religion in general and Catholic faith and practice in particular?"

"I flatter myself that I am quite well-informed by this time," said Van Deever. "I started out three

months ago by reading the Bible, but, strange to say, although I am a University graduate, there were few things that were perfectly clear to me. After a while a servant gave me a catechism, and later on this young lady invited me to attend a course of Lenten sermons delivered in her church. In the meantime I learned the prayers and carefully read several controversial and doctrinal books."

"Well, now, I congratulate you!" said Father Morrin. "But one thing more — are you firmly resolved to become a Catholic, even should this young lady die or go to a convent?"

"If certain difficulties can be cleared up — yes," said Van Deever. "I am resolved to join the Church because I feel that it will be my duty to God. But why do you suggest that this young lady may go to a convent? I am determined to do all in my power to prevent that."

"It was merely a suggestion," laughed Father Morrin. "I suppose you would not stoop to physical violence or other undue influence to prevent such a step on her part?"

"Oh, no!" said Van Deever, "but I must confess that this world would be a pretty dreary place for me without her."

"You have my entire sympathy," said Father Morrin, in a gentle tone; "and I shall pray that things may go well with you."

Van Deever was much moved at the kindness of the good priest, and expressed his gratitude. He then went on to say that one of the doctrines which was

particularly repugnant to him was the teaching and practice of confession.

"There are two causes which inspire this repugnance," said Father Morrin. "The one is ignorance or a misconception regarding the confessional, the other is a vicious and corrupt heart. Have you ever read what Cardinal Manning says on the second cause in his 'The Love of Jesus to Penitents'?"

"I have never seen the book," said Webster Van Deever.

"Then I can't explain things better than by reading you an extract from it," said the priest, gravely:

"'The Sacrament of Penance is loved by Catholics, and hated by the world. Like the Pillar, which of old guided the people of God, to us it is all light, to the world it is all darkness. There are two things of which the world would fain rid itself — of the Day of Judgment and of the Sacrament of Penance: of the former, because it is searching and inevitable; of the latter, because it is the anticipation and the witness of the judgment to come. For this reason there is no evil that the world will not say of the confessional. It would dethrone the eternal Judge if it could, therefore it spurns the judge who sits in the tribunal of penance, because he is within the reach of its heel. And not only the world without the Church, but also the world within its unity, the impure, the false, the proud, the lukewarm, the worldly Catholic, and in a word, all who are impenitent, both fear and shrink from the shadow of the Great White Throne which falls on them from the Sacrament of Penance. But

to all who are penitent, in whatsoever degree and of whatsoever character, it is an object of love.'

"I'm sure this is not the cause of your repugnance. It must, therefore, be that you have not considered this doctrine from the standpoint of Almighty God. Every one with ordinary intelligence admits that God, the Lord and Master, has promulgated His holy law, promising the reward of heaven for its observance and threatening the punishment of hell for its violation. By holy Baptism — you have learned what Baptism means to the soul?"

"Yes, Father, I understand that."

"Well, then. Baptism makes one a child of God, but as he is not confirmed in grace he falls at times into sin instead of advancing step by step toward perfection. Now, if God were to condemn man to hell as He condemned the angels, He would treat the sinner according to His justice. But, as He does not wish the death of the sinner, God offers man pardon and reconciliation. If God were to insist on the most rigorous penance it would be a trifle for the sinner who is resolved to escape the torments of hell and secure the happiness of heaven. On his part the repentant sinner desires not only forgiveness of his sins, but also the certainty of pardon. This certainty calms his fears about the past, gives him peace in the present, and encourages him to strive manfully to repair his waywardness and secure the reward of heaven. Now, in the Sacrament of Penance God makes the most liberal offer of pardon to the sinner, and at the same time grants to the repentant soul di-

vine assurance of pardon. Is that doctrine not reasonable? most consoling? overflowing, in fact, with the infinite mercy and compassionate love of God?"

"That is true, Father," admitted Van Deever, "yet it is humiliating."

"Granted, but think of the greater shame and confusion of confessing on the Day of Judgment! If we repent and confess our sins here, we know that they will be washed away in the blood of the Saviour, so that they will not testify against us even on the day of reckoning," said Father Morrin.

"That places the confessional in a different light," candidly admitted Van Deever, "and removes my objection to it. Yes, under such conditions I will gladly confess even my most hidden sins."

"But I have more to say on the confessional," continued Father Morrin. "We have considered it merely in its actual effects. It is really a preservative of virtue and the guide of souls. If God does so much for a sinner, what will He do for the one who strives to become a saint? If the confessional gives spiritual life, it certainly is able to foster and perfect this life in the soul. It is only by submitting to the guidance of God's representative that we are saved from the delusions of pride and self-love, and are stimulated in a healthy moral growth. Take the girl who has won your heart, for example. I don't know her from the rest of the daughters of Eve, but I do know a little of human nature and the influence of grace. What is really the secret of your esteem and devotion for her?"

"I have often asked myself that question," said Van Deever.

"I'll answer it," said Father Morrin, earnestly. "The secret of your attraction for her *is the confessional.* The confessional has elevated her, preserved her innocence and purity, spiritualized her entire being, by making her a living child of God. Others might do much to please you and share your good fortune — but only one type of woman would have this girl's moral courage."

CHAPTER XIV

A FAMILY QUARREL

WEBSTER VAN DEEVER walked home with a buoyant step on Easter Monday night. The very fact of having had so long and so interesting a conversation with Father Morrin gave him much happiness, and the assurance of that good man's sympathy and prayers raised his spirits to such a degree that he was inclined to confuse his first step toward joining the Church with preparations for his immediate marriage to Margaret Redmond. In this happy frame of mind wind and rain had no terrors for him. He was not inclined to read or to speculate when he reached home, for he had finally resolved to place himself under Father Morrin's guidance the following week. So at peace with himself and all the world, he went to bed and was soon lost in a sweet, refreshing slumber.

Easter Tuesday was destined to be a memorable day in the Chicago office of the Van Deever firm. At an early hour two telegrams were brought in. One was from Homer Van Deever, which informed his son that he expected to arrive in Chicago via the Michigan Central at half-past three o'clock. The other was from Mrs. Wilson, Margaret's aunt in Baltimore, requesting her niece to meet her at the Baltimore and

Ohio train at nine the following morning. Margaret immediately handed this message to Webster Van Deever.

"My aunt is coming on a brief visit, and expects to take my mother east with her," she said. "The doctor insists on a change of air to help toward her complete restoration. I would like to spend some days home now — Miss Long is back, so you will be able to dispense more readily with my services — and help get things ready."

Van Deever listened with mingled joy and regret. He realized only too well that Mrs. Redmond, for some inexplicable reason, was prejudiced against him, and he thought that his suit would make better progress if the mother was absent for a brief while. Still, he could not bear the thought of having Margaret away from him even for a day. He felt that she had become absolutely necessary to his existence.

"I can't say no to you, Miss Redmond," he answered. "You've been very faithful these last three months, and it is only natural you would want a few days under these circumstances. Will you please, however, remain here to-day until four o'clock, as I want you to meet my father. He has just wired me from Detroit. And then, if you do not object, I'll make arrangements to accompany you to the depot in the morning and bring you and your aunt to your home."

Homer Van Deever was a man of herculean build, who knew neither fatigue nor sickness. His principal ambition in life was to enhance and perpetuate the

family name by making his son a leading factor in the financial world. He had treated many unmercifully in his long life, and unjustly, too, believing that might was right, and it was this policy which had brought Philip Redmond to an early grave. In addition he had the sagacity and indomitable will which are characteristic of modern business success.

He smiled approvingly now, as he entered the Chicago office in company with his son and Mr. Jenkins, who had gone to meet him. He had a kind word for all the clerks, as they were introduced one by one, until Margaret Redmond's name was mentioned. To the surprise of all, for all were listening and observant, this name seemed to strike a discordant note.

"What is it? What is that name again?" he demanded, drawing down his eyebrows.

"Miss Redmond — Miss Margaret Redmond," repeated his son, a little surprised. "One of the ablest stenographers —"

"Any relation to Philip Redmond, who died here a few years ago?" demanded Homer Van Deever, imperiously.

"His daughter," answered Margaret, looking at the senior member of the firm with an expression of astonishment and pain.

"Humph!" growled Van Deever, unpleasantly. "We'll see!" He turned on his heel at once and entered his son's private office, leaving Margaret red with embarrassment, and conscious that all eyes were fastened on her.

"What's the matter, dad?" asked Webster Van

Deever, in a puzzled tone, as he followed him. "Are you sick, or tired from the trip?"

"Sick! Tired! Ever know me to be sick or tired?" said his father. "I want you to dismiss that creature at once!"

"Why! Whom do you mean?"

"Philip Redmond's girl. No Redmond shall ever work in this office as long as I live."

Webster Van Deever stood staring at his father in complete astonishment.

"She's all right, dad. Every one in the office will tell you that she does as much work as two ordinary clerks. Ah! Come in, Mr. Jenkins, and Mr. Bartholomew! We were talking of Miss Redmond. I leave you to verify my statement that she is an excellent and faithful worker."

Both men immediately bore out the truth of these words, but Homer Van Deever was not the man to listen. He dismissed them curtly enough, and sent for Miss Redmond, intending, indeed, to summarily discharge her. But she had saved herself this humiliation by departing for home as soon as Mr. Van Deever entered his son's office.

Webster Van Deever instantly realized what this meant for him. If Margaret were dismissed now she would probably pass out of his life forever. Again, as manager of the local office he had a perfect right to choose his assistants. Then, too, he was in a hot temper of anger against his father, considering that he had humiliated him and disgraced him in the eyes of his entire force of subordinates.

So when Bartholomew and Jenkins had retired, and Mr. Jenkins had delivered the information that Miss Redmond had gone home, the young man turned on his father, saying in a tone that was dangerously calm:

"I have a perfect right to engage and retain just whom I please in this office, dad. I consider your conduct not only ungentlemanly, but also extremely unbusinesslike. Wait, please, until I finish!" as his father tried to interrupt him. "A Redmond was in this office before we came to Chicago. A Redmond is engaged here now, and a Redmond shall stay here as long as I am a member of the firm, if she chooses!"

Homer Van Deever's wrath rose mountain-high.

"I suppose you know that I crushed her father and brought him to the grave in order to give you a start in life!" he hissed savagely. "You taunt me with it now by making her your right hand! Well, I give you twenty-four hours to reconsider the matter. At the end of that time I'll put *you* out of the office and cut you off without a cent!"

And with this Homer Van Deever grabbed up his hat, stalked out of the room, and made his way to the house on Jackson Boulevard.

Webster Van Deever quietly reviewed the meaning of his father's words, as his anger gradually cooled. He understood now the aversion Homer Van Deever must feel toward Margaret, and the reason of Mrs. Redmond's antipathy toward himself. If only he had known the truth! But then he was glad that he had

not known, for how could he have presumed to face her, to woo her, with his father's guilt, like the mark of Cain, upon his forehead? The gravity of the situation overwhelmed him. He must share his father's misdeeds by submitting to him and deserting the woman he loved, or he must take what was his and go his way. Painful though such a choice might be, it did not take him long to arrive at a decision.

He loved Margaret. They had not pledged their love in words, but he was sure that she reciprocated his affection, since love has a language of its own. She had said nothing, promised nothing — and yet he had desired always to prove himself her friend. The day on which to prove himself had dawned. He would take his own private fortune and strike out for himself. In the morning when he saw her he would tell her all; he would tell her that she was far dearer to him than his father; he would tell her of his intention to join the Church as soon as Father Morrin thought him sufficiently instructed. Then certainly they would come to an understanding. He would make Mrs. Redmond's life comfortable at least, and try to make up to both of them for what they had suffered at his father's hands! But now came the fear that Margaret might spurn him when she learned all.

"Even if she does," he said, resolutely, "she can not prevent me from making restitution in as far as I am able."

Being a thorough man of business the young fellow started to put his office in order for whoever might succeed him. After preparing a detailed memoran-

dum of various matters for Mr. Jenkins, he finally closed his desk and left the building.

Homer Van Deever had not recovered his equanimity by any means before he reached his home. He showed his anger there by abusing the servants who came in to welcome him and soon found fuel to feed his wrath in certain books which lay on a small table in the drawing-room. One was a costly Bible. On the fly-leaf was inscribed in his son's bold handwriting: "A remembrance of my first visit to Margaret Redmond." Others were doctrinal books, containing the clumsy autograph of Andy O'Regan. Homer Van Deever immediately concluded that Andy was at the bottom of all the trouble. He sent for him. No sooner had Andy entered the room than book after book was leveled, in tempestuous fury, at his head.

"You snake! You hypocrite!" shrieked the enraged man. "Get out of here! Get out of my way! Get out of this house! I won't have you in it another moment!"

"I'll go, or I'll stay, just as my master says," said Andy with quiet dignity, as he stooped to gather up the volumes which had narrowly missed him.

"You will, will you?" shouted Homer Van Deever, infuriated. "I'll throw you into the street with my own hands —"

"Put a finger on me, sir, and you'll sleep one night of your life in jail," said Andy, in the calm tone more maddening than any rage could have been. "And I'm neither a snake nor a hypocrite, for I have faith-

fully kept the promise I made you twenty-six years ago."

"I'll hound you like a dog!" shrieked Van Deever.

"You are old enough to have better sense," said Andy, getting out of the room and closing the door behind him, not knowing whether it was another book or his foot that Homer Van Deever lunged at him. By the noise against the door it seemed as if the gentleman had tried to kick him. Andy went upstairs, packed his belongings quickly, and locked his trunk. He knew that Homer Van Deever was implacable, and that he would be forced to leave. Then he went downstairs again and out the back way, going down the street to stand guard and watch for his master's return. When Webster Van Deever finally came Andy described the scenes which had been enacted at the house since his father's arrival.

"Go down to the Auditorium," Webster said, after weighing the matter carefully for a moment; "engage suitable rooms for both of us. Then step in at the post office and direct all my mail to be delivered at the hotel until further notice. And then send a wagon for our trunks."

On the way to his own room Homer Van Deever intercepted him.

"What is this I find you reading?" he sneered. "You Papist! You degenerate!"

"Father," said the young man, quietly, "I am leaving to-night. But before I go I wish to state that I was entirely ignorant of the fact that it was you who ruined Philip Redmond. Nor had I any idea

that you employed such tactics to enrich your son. I shall make reparation to those you have wronged as soon as I can find them.

"I also wish to say that I am no degenerate. You brought me up like a human animal. Of late I have discovered that I have an immortal soul that is not content with the honors, riches, and pleasures of this life. Disinherit me, if you want to. The only favor I ask is that you give my mother my love when you return to New York. Tell her also that I shall cherish her memory as long as I live."

CHAPTER XV.

"BEGONE, SATAN!"

HOMER VAN DEEVER went back to the drawing-room, storming and raging as he thought of his son and the events of that day. He walked the floor like a caged beast. In one continuous stream he poured forth the fury of his wrath on the three who had provoked it. When he had fumed until he could fume no more, he sat down to the table, filled a glass of wine, and lit one of his son's cigars.

"The impudence of that boy trying to dictate to his own father!" he began. "The cunning of that adventuress — the ingratitude of that pauper O'Regan! I'll show them I'm no dotard! I'm still master! Philip Redmond is dead, and his ghost shall not haunt my office. At least Webster should respect my — but he's always been a stubborn mule! This time I hold the purse-strings — and I'll make him bite the dust! I will! I will!"

The wine warmed his selfish heart and the cigar soothed his irritated nerves, so that, after a while, his anger seemed to die away a trifle.

"By jingo, but the lad has grit!" said Van Deever, bringing his fist down on the table. "If I can only manage him, he'll buy out many a millionaire yet — he's got the spunk and ability to do it! In spite of his

mulishness I hate to turn him loose. I won't! He *must* give in! He *must* see it my way!" He thought again of the bold defiance which had met his peremptory demand of Margaret Redmond's dismissal. "The audacity of him to engage Philip Redmond's daughter and cling to her in spite of my express wish! . . . But I'll do anything for the boy — I will, if he only gets rid of that — of that girl!"

He jumped up then and went to the telephone. When he had finally located Mr. Jenkins he told him to come to him at once, as he had a matter of some importance to discuss with him.

Long before Jenkins could arrive Webster had superintended the removal of his and Andy's trunks, and departed. The servants who helped him later on informed his father that he had gone to the Auditorium Hotel. Homer Van Deever was still upset when Jenkins was announced, and lost no time in opening the conference.

"In all my life," he said, stiffly, "I have never been treated so contemptuously. And I will not take it, not even from my own son."

"No, Mr. Van Deever," said Jenkins, his fawning manner much in evidence. "It is not to be expected that you should."

"You, of course, know the reason why I do not want a Redmond in my office, for you closed the deal with that girl's father. Webster informs me that he knew nothing of the transaction — at least that is

one extenuating circumstance. But son or no son — I'm going to fight him to the bitter end!"

Mr. Jenkins said nothing — there was nothing for him to say.

"On one condition, therefore, I will take him back — he must give up the Redmond girl. He is down at the Auditorium now, and I've sent for you to see if together we can devise some plan to bring him to his senses."

With the sagacity of a shrewd reader of character, for Jenkins was used to weighing the minds of men in his own interests, he saw now that Homer Van Deever was really anxious to be reconciled to his son.

"Webster, like many a high-strung young man, is rather impetuous," he said. "Perhaps he might be made to see the error of his defiance and to accept the chance of coming to some agreement with you."

"Precisely my idea!" said Homer Van Deever, pleased with these words of his subordinate. "I want you, therefore, to use your influence with him. If you can persuade him to listen," he waited a moment, tapping his fingers thoughtfully on the table, "well, there'll be a thousand dollars in it for you."

"You are too generous," said Jenkins, his eyes sparkling with delight, for he had no misgivings but that the money was as good as earned. "I feel confident that I can send you a favorable report within an hour."

"That's good," declared Homer Van Deever, his spirits rising. "I will remain up, then, until I hear

from you by 'phone. The other matter we'll take care of in the morning."

So many urgent affairs had engaged Webster Van Deever's attention that it was too late to telephone to Margaret, or to call on her after his arrival at the hotel. Besides, he meant to go to her house very early in the morning, and put the whole case before her and her mother. Andy was patiently waiting for him when he got to his new rooms.

"The Lord must have great things in store for you when you become a child of God, Mr. Webster," said Andy, "for the Bible says 'Whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.' I'm praying hard that His angels will watch over you in this hour of trial."

"I'll be satisfied if there's just one angel faithful to me, Andy," said Webster Van Deever, with a pleasant smile.

Soon after they had taken themselves to their quarters, a bell-boy rapped at the door, and announced a gentleman to see Mr. Van Deever. He handed in Mr. Jenkins' card.

"Jenkins!" exclaimed the young man, looking at Andy in a puzzled fashion. "Well, show him up!" he said to the bell-boy. Andy went into the inner room reserved for himself, but made up his mind to see the departure of this unexpected visitor.

"With all my heart I regret this unpleasant turn of affairs," began Mr. Jenkins, as he entered Webster's apartment. "I can not help admiring your pluck —

but I've come to see if we can't adjust matters so that business may go on as usual in the morning."

Webster suspected the errand on which Jenkins had come. But he was not in the right frame of mind to discuss the happenings of the afternoon, besides, his relations with Mr. Jenkins had always been of the most formal character, and for this reason, and because of an unconfessed dislike for the man, the vice-president was an unfortunate envoy.

"You can not regret it more than I do," he said, coldly, "and I can't see where matters may be adjusted. Certainly not without sacrificing my self-respect, and that I refuse to do. I certainly will not discharge Miss Redmond. She came to us when we needed her services badly, and I feel that she is now a very important member of our staff."

"I'm afraid I scarcely agree with you," said Jenkins. "Surely a stenographer is not worth such a momentous quarrel? Your father is rather vexed at the very thought that you could quarrel with him over such a trivial affair. He called me up an hour ago, and when I reached the house, expressed his regret at what had occurred, and sent me to talk it over with you to see how the matter could be amicably taken care of."

"Did my father mention the cause of his antipathy toward Miss Redmond?"

"Oh, I know all about the Redmond affair," said Mr. Jenkins. "I was in charge at the time — what about it? Business is business, Mr. Van Deever."

Webster flushed with angry indignation, yet he had sufficient control of himself to say, with emphasis:

"But I had no knowledge of any transactions happening before I took charge and could not have been wanting in deference to my father when I engaged Miss Redmond."

"That's all true," said Mr. Jenkins. "Every one in the office is willing to exonerate you, Mr. Van Deever,— but you must compromise now."

"I would compromise if my father had not cut off every means of my doing so honorably," said Van Deever. "There is nothing left now but for him to take care of his own affairs and allow me to manage mine."

"Oh, but now, Mr. Van Deever, you'll surely acknowledge that your father has certain rights as president of our company which we all have to respect."

"I am willing to respect them," said Webster, coldly. "But in this case he has exceeded his rights."

"Miss Redmond possesses an admirable character, and has done her work well — for which you have paid her well. There your obligation ceases," said Jenkins, desperately. "Have you really considered this step? You have started on a successful business career. You have money, friends, luxury, and can afford to gratify your most expensive tastes. Yet you would sacrifice these for the sake of a woman? Honor and gallantry are all very fine, Mr. Webster,

but you must realize how far they are carrying you. If you refuse to obey him, your father will perhaps not only disinherit you, but thwart you in every enterprise you undertake."

Webster Van Deever laughed aloud.

"Let him try it!" he said. "And as soon as may be! I'm ready!"

"You're a fool!" said Jenkins, as he saw the promised reward slipping through his fingers. "I had no idea that that jade had you so twisted around her little finger! She —"

"What, what!" cried Van Deever, springing to his feet indignantly.

"If you were not so hopelessly infatuated with a common adventuress," hissed Jenkins, "you would realize that an inheritance of fifty million dollars could purchase for you the joys of Solomon!"

Choking with a rage almost as strong as that which had animated his father earlier in the day Webster Van Deever swung out his powerful right arm, and his closed fist struck Jenkins so severely on the side of the head that the weakling fell to the floor unconscious, blood streaming from his nose and mouth.

The disturbance brought several porters and Andy on the scene at once.

"Keep this quiet!" ordered the young man, to the porters, handing each a ten-dollar note. "Summon a good doctor and telephone Homer Van Deever, on Jackson Boulevard, that his agent has met with an accident and is lying unconscious on the floor."

When Homer Van Deever finally arrived at the

hotel he was shocked to hear that his son had hastily departed on the midnight train in company with his servant, and that Jenkins had not recovered consciousness sufficiently to explain what had happened. For the sake of the family name and in the interests of the company, the financier paid out a considerable sum to keep all notice of the unfortunate affair from the public.

CHAPTER XVI

"MARYLAND, MY MARYLAND!"

WHEN she left the office on that Easter Tuesday afternoon Margaret Redmond had no idea that the intervention of divine Providence was so near at hand, by which her own heart was to be purified, and the sincerity of Webster Van Deever tested and proven. Seated in the car on her homeward way, Margaret recalled her pastor's words with a shudder. She saw, in Homer Van Deever's arrival, the forerunner of approaching trouble. Yet she tried to calm her fears by saying to herself that disagreeable old man would remain only a few days, and that Webster would offer ample apology for his father's peculiar and insulting conduct before the rest of her fellow-workers.

Having thus disposed of the anxiety to which her meeting with Homer Van Deever had given rise, Margaret opened her handbag and took out the telegram received that day from her aunt. Though she had never seen Mrs. Wilson, who had spent most of her married life in South America, where her husband held a responsible position with a large American corporation, she felt quite intimate with her, for she had for years conducted her mother's correspondence. As she went home Margaret's thoughts were

naturally centered on this aunt of whom she had heard so much, and whom she hoped to welcome joyously the following morning.

On entering the house she found her mother sitting by the parlor fire, where Genevieve had left her for a few moments. Margaret had already telephoned the good news home, and Mrs. Redmond was much delighted.

"I'm so glad Mary is coming," remarked Mrs. Redmond. "I haven't seen her for twenty years. You were a little child when she married Mr. Wilson of the Barber Asphalt Co., and went with him to Venezuela, so of course you can't remember her! But I can see her just as she looked years ago. How quickly the time passes — I will soon be fifty-five years old! Charles, and John, and Lawrence are dead, my brothers, and your aunts Esther and Philomena, the Lord have mercy on them all! Matthew, Paul, Agnes, Mary and I are still left. God knows who will be the next to go."

"No one for a long, long while," said Margaret, affectionately.

"I'll be so glad to see dear Maryland again before I die!" said Mrs. Redmond. And then she wandered off into dreams of girlhood days. When she awoke from her reverie, Margaret was seated beside her on the arm of the chair.

"I wonder if Mary is much changed," she said, then. "Photographs are so deceiving! Do you think you'll be able to recognize her?"

"Why, certainly," said Margaret, touching her

mother's hands gently. "You see, she will be looking for me, while I will be at the gate looking for her. I won't let her slip by me, even though she should not know who I am."

"What is the matter, Margaret?" asked Mrs. Redmond, then, in sudden alarm. She scrutinized her daughter's face and felt her hands. "You are not well! Your face is so pale and your hands are so cold!"

"I'm all right, dear," protested Margaret. "I was upset and annoyed a little at the office, and the effects have not worn away, I presume."

"Upset and annoyed! That young man has been annoying you! I knew it — I felt that he would!"

Margaret had resolved not to speak of Homer Van Deever's arrival and the subsequent affront which she had had to endure from him. But she had never kept anything from her mother in all her life, and now, when Mrs. Redmond insisted strenuously on knowing the entire facts, she could not remain silent. She had no clue to the mother's secret fear of Homer Van Deever, a fear which she had always had, even in health. But weakened as she was by illness and worried not a little by Webster Van Deever's persistent wooing of her daughter, the knowledge that this man, who had been the cause of sending her dear husband to his grave, was now in the same city with them both seemed to overwhelm her utterly.

"O dear God, he is pursuing us still!" she moaned and fainted away.

With Genevieve's help Margaret succeeded in get-

ting her mother to bed. They rubbed her hands and bathed her forehead and when all their ministrations failed to revive her, they summoned Dr. King. After administering a tonic, and making various inquiries concerning her rest and diet, he turned to Margaret:

"This looks as if she has had some severe shock," he said. "Has she had any bad news recently?"

In a few words, and with great distress, Margaret explained the cause of her mother's sudden seizure. Dr. King agreed at once that an immediate removal from the city was imperative in order to set Mrs. Redmond's mind completely at rest.

In the morning, Margaret went to the depot in ample time to meet the train. She had been hoping that Webster Van Deever would not keep his word about calling for her, as she was afraid that this might cause her mother further distress, and her hope was fulfilled, for she neither saw nor heard from him. She took her stand opposite the gate, observing each passenger closely. She was not a little surprised when a middle-aged lady approached her without hesitation and embraced her heartily.

"My dear, I would recognize you anywhere! You are your mother's very self — just as she looked on her wedding-day! How is she, my dear child?"

"She's been failing all winter, as you know," replied Margaret, "but she had a sudden sinking spell last night, when she learned that Homer Van Deever, whom, I now understand, was the man who ruined papa's business, had returned to the city. The doctor

says she ought to leave as soon as possible. She rested well, and is quite bright this morning. She is so anxious to see you."

Mrs. Redmond, of course, could not remain in bed. With Genevieve's assistance she was able to dress and was waiting for her daughter and sister in the parlor when they arrived. Here the sisters met, and embraced each other, shedding tears of happiness. Mrs. Redmond chatted as though she had never been ill, and even joined them at the dinner-table, afterward suggesting that the girls sing, "Maryland, My Maryland," in which both she and her sister joined. There was so much to tell and to be told. Mrs. Wilson related the history of their Eastern relatives, about their sisters and brothers and their families, their nieces and nephews, her own family, their conditions and aspirations. Finally the sisters drifted into an exchange of personal reminiscences of days gone by, omitting nothing of interest from their earliest recollection to the present.

But in spite of all Mrs. Wilson's efforts to direct her sister's mind, Mrs. Redmond came back again and again to the cause of her present trouble. She explained at length how the rapacity of the Van Deevers had brought her dear Philip to an early grave, and how they now threatened to rob her of Margaret, her one consolation. It thus happened that as the sisters talked and laughed and wept in turn, Mrs. Wilson gradually perceived the wisdom of the doctor's advice, and finally suggested that they arrange to leave for Baltimore on the 10.40 train the following morn-

ing. When this had been agreed upon, Mrs. Redmond retired for a little nap, while Mrs. Wilson joined the two girls to help them prepare for the journey.

"And what will you do, Margaret, when your mother is gone?" she asked her niece.

"Work, I suppose, so that I can provide for her when she returns," said Margaret, smiling. "I think I shall store the furniture and stay with Genevieve while mother is away."

"Why not sell it at once and come with us?" said Mrs. Wilson, urgently. "With your ability you can find work anywhere. And besides you will have so many relatives anxious to entertain you that you won't be able to work for some time to come."

"I do wish we could both go," said Margaret. "Wouldn't it be splendid, Genevieve? We would have a fine time and come back with mother." She grew thoughtful as she spoke. Webster Van Deever's silence was very puzzling — she could not understand it. Was it possible —

"I would enjoy a visit," said Genevieve, "but not at present. I have certain very important reasons for staying in Chicago."

Instead of sleeping, Mrs. Redmond lay on her bed and thought of her approaching visit to the scenes of her childhood. She thought, too, of the dangers to which Margaret might be exposed during her absence, and with all her fears of the Van Deevers newly aroused, she suddenly determined that she would not leave Margaret behind — that her daughter must accompany her to Baltimore. She got up from her

pillows, therefore, and went into the parlor, where the others were busily engaged in packing; she was just in time to catch the drift of the conversation.

"That is right, that is right!" she exclaimed to her sister. "Margaret must come with us. I will not leave her here, exposing her to God knows what dangers."

"But, mother!" exclaimed Margaret, in consternation. "How are we to make a living there?"

"I don't know, sweetheart," said the mother, firmly. "I know we can't afford it — but God will provide for us. He will, my darling. Only let us go away."

Margaret and Genevieve sat silent, stunned. Both turned pale. Margaret gave her friend a quick glance — then drew a long, resolute breath. She went to her mother's side and put her arms around her tenderly.

"I have never disobeyed you in my life, nor refused to take your counsel, mother," she said. "I will not now. I gladly go with you, and God will provide for us as you say."

As soon as this was decided upon Margaret's trunk was brought forth and she, too, began to prepare for the journey. It was agreed that Genevieve would see to the storing of the furniture and also notify Margaret's employer of her sudden departure.

"Genevieve," said Margaret, when the two were alone after supper, "isn't it odd that in spite of Webster Van Deever's promise to come here this morning, and his — well, his devotion all along — doesn't

it seem peculiar that I haven't seen or heard from him? Especially after his father's horrid treatment of me? Or do you think his father's arrival —"

She looked sad and disappointed. Genevieve made no reply.

"It may mean a complete change of feeling on his part," continued Margaret.

"It does look queer," admitted Genevieve, "but give him until morning. Something may have prevented him from coming to-day, or he may be busy — but he could have 'phoned!" she said, in a vicious little tone, for she was very much put out. "However, give him the benefit of the doubt. If we don't hear from him to-morrow before you leave: Well, you write to him. I'll deliver the note."

Nothing was seen nor heard of Webster Van Deever up to a half-hour of their departure. So Margaret's last act in Chicago was to sit down and indite the following note, with suggestions from Genevieve that would have made it decidedly more energetic, had the girl thought it advisable to insert the parenthetic remarks with which her friend punctuated every sentence:

"DEAR MR. VAN DEEVER: This is to inform you that I am leaving for Baltimore on the 10.40 train, and to notify you that I resign my position, not alone during my absence from Chicago, but after my return. Nothing could ever induce me to enter your employ again, and had I known the truth concerning your

father's unscrupulous conduct toward those dear to me, nothing could ever have induced me to enter your office at any time.

"In regard to your apparent friendship for myself, you will kindly remember in the future that I shall consider any evidence of such, an additional insult from one whom I have good cause to hold in contempt.

"Sincerely yours,

"MARGARET REDMOND."

TO MR. WEBSTER VAN DEEVER.

And even Genevieve Harty was satisfied with this.

CHAPTER XVII

SYMPATHETIC HEARTS

"AS long as I live I'll never, *never,* NEVER trust a man again!"

It was Genevieve, of course. She and her brother Lawrence were packing the Redmond furniture. Ordinarily good-natured and careless and willing to make light of many seemingly important matters, Genevieve had a keen sense of the respect due her womanhood. The more she reflected on Webster Van Deever's treatment of Margaret Redmond the more irritated she became.

"Thank you, oh, *thank* you!" replied her brother, as he seated himself on the box he had been packing, and lit his pipe. "What am I doing here if you can't trust men?"

"Pardon me," said Genevieve. "That compliment was not intended for you, but for a certain man named Van Deever whom I— You won't tell on me if I use slang, will you? Honest? Well, Lawrence, I'd just like," she doubled her two small fists, and her eyes sparkled dangerously, "I'd like to *tan him to a finish this minute!*"

Lawrence Harty doubled up with laughter. He knew Genevieve well enough to realize that she meant every word she said.

"Ho, ho, ho!" he laughed. "I'll take it for granted that you are an expert in painting, powdering and dyeing — spare me! Don't throw that, you *might* hit me! I'd no idea you'd got to tanning. Will it be tattooing next?"

"Oh, be serious. I'm disgusted!"

"Tell me why you've got it in for that poor Dutchman."

"He's not a Dutchman — he's an American. That's why I can't forgive him for the way he's treated Margaret."

"Tried to elope with her?" suggested Lawrence Harty. "I didn't think she was *that* kind — but there's no telling what a girl will do."

"You can depend upon it that a girl will work out her own salvation wisely," replied Genevieve, "if you don't make her lose her head by trifling with her heart-strings."

"Granted!" said Lawrence. "Now, however, tell me who Van Deever is, and what he has done to Margaret."

"Haven't you ever heard of Webster Van Deever of the Van Deever brokerage firm?" asked Genevieve, in surprise.

"My dear girl, since I'm no longer necessary to the support of the family, and am so rarely in Chicago, I know little about the city. So perhaps that's why I haven't the pleasure of being acquainted with the gentleman."

"But I'm acquainted with him," said Genevieve, ill-humoredly, "and the acquaintance isn't any sort of

pleasure to me just now. He is the son of a millionaire, the graduate from some Eastern University, and at present manager of his father's Chicago office."

"Well, I gave Margaret credit for having sense! How did she come to think of such a man as that seriously?"

"You can just depend on it that Margaret wouldn't have anything to do with him!" said Genevieve hotly. "He tormented her and followed her, and was at her feet continually for the past four months! Then, the night before last, Papa Van Deever appeared on the scene, unexpectedly, and Mr. Webster has been conspicuous by his absence since."

"I'm interested," said Lawrence. "Tell me all about it."

"There isn't much to tell," said Genevieve. "She met him at the Charity Ball, on New Year's Eve. He actually tried to kiss her and she snubbed him well."

"Good! Would you have done the same, Genevieve?" teased her brother.

"Of course I would if I had done what was right," said Genevieve, sharply. "Do you think I would sacrifice any of my principles even for the son of a millionaire?"

"Oh! the principle being that you would cheapen yourself."

"No. That's the principle of the worldly wise," said Genevieve, shrewdly. "My principle is that kissing isn't right."

"You'd make it a sin to kiss your mother?" asked Lawrence, laughingly.

"Don't be silly!" said Genevieve. "You know what I mean. A girl is imprudent and wanting in modesty if she permits such familiarities from any one but members of her family, and her own sex."

"Good!" said Lawrence. "But how about Mr. —?"

"As Father Dinneen told us a few Sundays ago," interrupted Genevieve, "St. Paul says that not all things that are lawful are expedient."

"I suppose I'll never dare to ask you to a dance again," said Lawrence, with a sign of seeming despair. "Since it was at a dance this terrible thing happened!"

"Ask me and see," suggested Genevieve. "An occasional dance is a good thing and I enjoy it. But the Church objects to the promiscuous dance or party, where you are thrown in with all kinds of people, people whom you would not care to recognize later. A nice dance, with select attendance and chaperons, is tolerated, especially if your parents are the chaperons. I don't think the Church objects to any innocent amusement."

"Listen to the theologian!" said Lawrence Harty in amusement. "You're becoming an expert since you attend Father Dinneen's conferences. But seriously, Genevieve, what would you think of a fellow who would give up a girl because he found out that she had permitted another man to kiss her?"

"I'd think him a prig and a prude!" said Genevieve. "He has no right to expect any more from

a girl than she may expect from him. The Commandments are given to him as well as to her."

"Well, then, when *should* young people seal their affections with a kiss?" demanded Lawrence.

"Why, when they become engaged, and occasionally afterward until they are married, and then real often."

"I wonder how long they should be engaged," persisted Lawrence. "That's a question you often hear discussed."

"It seems to me no man ought to monopolize a girl's time unless he intended to marry and was able to support her. Then when they find out that their ways and tastes harmonize, they ought to become engaged, and marry as soon after as ever they can. But, look here! Why are you asking all these questions, I'd like to know!" she said, suspiciously.

"Oh, because I happened to kiss, with serious intentions, a charming young lady just before I came home for my Easter vacation," said Lawrence, his eyes dancing merrily.

"Well! You dear old bachelor!" Genevieve jumped up and threw her arms about her brother with delight. "This is interesting — tell me all about it! Who is she? What sort of a girl is my future sister-in-law?"

"This is not for publication yet," warned Lawrence. "But I felt so good I had to tell some one."

"And I just happened to be around!" pouted Genevieve. "But never mind — tell me what she looks like."

"What do you think she *ought* to look like?" teased her brother. "Come, now — what kind of girl do you think I ought to marry?"

"In the first place, she must be a Catholic," said Genevieve.

"Surely — I wouldn't think of having any one else. And that reminds me of an incident that took place on the train one day when I was coming East from La Crosse. Three drummers sat opposite me discussing the subject of marriage. One rather dissolute-looking chap had been boasting of a rather doubtful moral career and concluded his remarks by declaring that if he ever married he'd look around for a good Catholic girl. I hope you credit your brother with as much good sense as Mr. Drummer."

"I certainly do," said Genevieve. "Then, I think she should not be too up-to-date. You're just the least little bit old-fashioned, Lawrence."

"I am. I had to work too hard when I was a boy to pay attention to all the little frivolities of the day. So I like the old-fashioned girl, who can keep house in the good old-fashioned way, and one who will not drive a fellow to drink by making a dyspeptic of him."

"You have good taste," said Genevieve.

"And a good appetite, too," declared her brother. "Mere beauty, influence, or culture would have little weight against home-making qualities. What I want is a life-partner with a heart so warm that she will cheer a home even when the frosts of old age descend upon it."

"But how in the world is any one to tell that beforehand?" asked Genevieve.

"They say clothes don't make the man," said Lawrence, as he lit his pipe for the second time, "and they don't make the woman, either. When I meet a selfish, conceited girl, I look ahead twenty years and see Madam Scold. But when I find a girl that forgets herself in caring for her parents and younger brothers, or in helping her neighbors and friends in distress, I've found the girl who will be an ideal Mrs. Lawrence Harty!"

"Oh, I'd love to see her," cried Genevieve, enthusiastically. "I know her appearance is a secondary matter — but what does she look like?"

"She's a nice, neat, sweet, little fair-haired girl about your size, with hazel eyes," answered her brother.

"And where did you find her? In St. Paul?"

"No — in Milwaukee," with a good-humored smile.

"And her name? What is her name?" pleaded Genevieve.

"Ludwina Kirjawski!"

"L-a-w-r-e-n-c-e H-a-r-t-y!" shrieked Genevieve. And then. "A Polish girl! Oh! What *will* your mother say?"

"Probably what our grandmother did," said her brother, calmly, as he blew out a big cloud of smoke, "when your father informed her that he was about to marry a German girl just learning English. Did you ever hear any one say mother wasn't perfect?"

"I never did," said Genevieve, in a quieter tone. "After all, I suppose it amounts to the same thing. But, Lawrence, who'd ever dream of you marrying a Polish girl!"

"Intermarriage between people of various nationalities gives the American people — and they are a distinct type — the life and vigor which make them lead the world," replied Lawrence, seriously. "I am neither Irish nor German. I claim to be as patriotic an American as your gilt-edged Van Deever, whose ancestors, doubtless, came over in the steerage. It seems to me that as the bobolink changes not only its plumage but even its habits, into those of the rice bird on going South, so people from all countries are here transformed into true Americans. It's in the air. They can't help it."

This philosophy of her eldest brother, whom Genevieve reverenced as a second father, had its effect on her impartial mind. She was really anxious to meet and welcome her new sister. Then she looked at her brother with an odd little smile. She had not even revealed to Margaret the secret which she was now about to confess to him.

"I have some news that concerns myself, too," she said.

"And what is it, sister? Or perhaps I might say — when was it?" with a laugh.

"Easter Sunday," said Genevieve, quietly. "Since that day I have been an engaged young woman."

"Whee!" cried Lawrence in delight. "My congratulations!"

"Thank you," replied Genevieve, demurely.

"And what sort of chap is he?"

"Now it's your turn to guess!" exclaimed Genevieve.

"Nothing too good for you, my girl!" said her brother, enthusiastically. "Of course he is a Catholic. Then he must be a clever business man to suit your notions, and he must have a genial disposition to appreciate your quiet humor. And his name is —"

"Francis Reginald Hingston!" declared Genevieve.

"What! A howling Britisher! What *will* your mother say?"

"Why, father and mother think he is just splendid!" said Genevieve, laughing.

"Great! Fine! When are you going to be married?"

"Some time in September if Margaret returns and everything goes well. And you?"

"I have won a June bride, who wants you to be bridesmaid."

"I'll be delighted," exclaimed Genevieve. "It will be a fine chance to rehearse for my own wedding-day."

And then they laughed and chatted, and Genevieve made strenuous efforts to pronounce the name of her brother's fiancée, until she finally mastered it. "But," she added, smiling, "I'm glad she's going to change it so soon — I'll never remember it."

And then the conversation came back to Margaret and her troubles.

"Let's hear more about Van Deever," said Law-

rence. "What did he do when Margaret squelched him?"

"He ran out to Seattle to forget all about her but came back more deeply in love than when he started. Finally, he managed to get her into his office, and was entirely devoted to her, and accompanied her to church every Sunday during Lent. He honestly changed his ways altogether, or seemed to, and was on the point of conversion. He had an indomitable will. When Margaret left the office Webster was engaged in a heated dispute with his father, who had shown his marked aversion for her. That was the last she saw of Webster Van Deever."

"If this is correct," said Lawrence, "something has gone wrong. A man of that stamp does not change his mind easily. We will hear from him again."

"Yes — if he isn't called upon to sacrifice his millions for the sake of the girl he pretended to love," said Genevieve in a bitter tone. "But I have a little note for him from Margaret which I have to deliver. I am going to bring it down myself, and find out the truth if I can."

The following morning Genevieve went down town expressly to discover all she might. The following letter, which she sent to Margaret later, will show better than words can her thoroughness, when her curiosity was aroused, and the means she took to satisfy it:

"My Dear Margaret: It occupied the whole of yesterday to attend to the storing of your furniture, so

I did not go down town until this morning. You may, therefore, imagine my surprise when I found the office deserted. No one beside Mr. Homer Van Deever, and the young lady whom you have introduced to me as Miss Long, were within. In answer to my inquiry for Mr. Webster the man used very impolite language indeed, informing me, when he could get his breath, that Mr. Webster Van Deever had left Chicago, and that the office was going to be closed. He then asked me, surlily, what my business was.

"As I knew just what you had written, I could not refrain from giving him your note. Well, you would have been amply revenged could you have seen his face when he ripped open that envelope and read its contents. The windows fairly rattled! He stormed up and down, and I thought he was going to have a seizure, so I went away with more haste than elegance, fearing that he might pour out the vials of his wrath on my poor head.

"I did so want to give you complete information, that on leaving the office I remembered that Frank Hingston and Miss Long were on bowing terms. So I went to Frank and persuaded him to try to find out what he could. He called up the Van Deever office near the noon hour, hoping to catch Miss Long alone, and asked some question about stocks (I need not remind you that I found the framing of this question for him quite easy after overhearing so many conversations between you and Mr. Webster). He introduced himself then and asked for Mr. Webster. Miss Long is not very discreet, my dear Margaret.

"'Why!' she exclaimed, 'that big fool has turned Catholic! He insulted his father and has nearly killed Mr. Jenkins, who is in the hospital. Then he took the midnight train for no one knows where, and his father has disinherited him.'

"'And has nothing been heard of him since?' asked Frank.

"'Nothing — but I hope they catch him and send him to the penitentiary!'

"With which charitable wish the conversation closed. I hope, dear Margaret, you'll not blame me for my detective work, as I know you don't approve of it. I am very sorry we misjudged poor Webster. I intend to atone by discovering his hiding-place and putting him in communication with you. But, my dear girl, I am overjoyed that Father Van Deever received your note instead of him! I hope your mother is getting better — give her the best wishes of the family, and an extra kiss for me. Dear Margaret, you do not know how I long to have a good talk with you. I hope that you will surely return before September. If I do not stop now I shall miss the postman, so good-by. Give my regards to Mrs. Wilson and all the family.

"Lovingly your friend,

"GENEVIEVE."

CHAPTER XVIII

DISINHERITED

"WELL, I hope I haven't killed Jenkins," said Webster Van Deever, addressing his servant somewhat anxiously, when they were comfortably seated in the smoking apartment of the 'Frisco train that left Chicago at 11.32 p. m. for St. Louis.

"He must have given you great provocation," commented Andy.

"I didn't mind anything he said until his remarks were applied to some one else," said Van Deever. "I had no intention of hitting him so hard — but I was too furious to restrain myself."

"By the way," said Andy. "You know that young lady who was in the office when I brought your father's message this morning? I recognized her as one who went to Holy Communion at Father Morrin's church nearly every day during Lent, and yet I can't recall seeing her there on Sundays."

"She lives out farther," said Van Deever, "and may have found it more convenient to step in at Father Morrin's on her way to the office." Then an idea struck him. "Do Catholics ever receive Holy Communion when not fasting?"

"Only in case of serious illness," Andy replied. "Why?"

"Why, she must have gone without her breakfast every morning!" said Van Deever.

"I suppose she put a cracker or two in her pocket and washed it down with a glass of water," said Andy. "She's the kind you ought to marry, Mr. Webster, when this blows over," he went on; "she'll be true, and steady, and devoted — mighty different from the butterfly kind of girls."

"I'm glad we think the same on this subject," said Webster Van Deever, laughing, "and I can assure you that if I didn't have urgent business in Mexico I would propose to her before the sun goes down again. Though I'm not sure she'd have me."

"Judging from what I've seen and heard of her I'm willing to bet the same five-spot I won from you that you wouldn't have to repeat your offer. She's one that doesn't mistake the clothes for the man."

"Good!" laughed Van Deever. "If she acts according to your prediction I'll buy you the best suit of clothes in the market."

The train had pulled through the tunnel, and was approaching the depot in St. Louis the following morning when Van Deever, who had been very thoughtful for some time, addressed Andy in a serious tone.

"Andy," he said, "you've been very faithful and devoted, but considering present circumstances, I feel as if I had no right to ask you to continue with me. I don't want to lose you, but if you prefer to look for another position I'll give you, gladly, the very best recommendation."

"I'm well satisfied where I am," said Andy.

"Since my wife died, and the children settled down in life I've laid away a nice nubbin for a rainy day. I have most of it with me in my pocket, and if you have no objections I'll travel right along with you and see the country. After it's gone, I've still a strong arm, and when that grows weak, thanks be to God, the door of the Little Sisters is always open."

"If that's the way you feel," said Van Deever, much relieved, "you hold on to your savings for that rainy day, and we'll continue the old arrangement. I can guarantee that you'll never have to ask shelter of the Little Sisters. Now, Andy, when we reach the depot," continued Van Deever, Andy's future being thus disposed of, "I want you to get me copies of all the morning papers. In the meantime I'll buy the tickets and re-check our baggage. Our train leaves in a half hour, so be sure not to miss it."

The tickets were bought and the baggage re-checked to New Laredo and then Webster met Andy at the gate and together they entered the car which was to carry them beyond the Rio Grande. Van Deever went over the papers carefully. Not a line touched on the affair that was filling his mind just then with the greatest anxiety.

"Perhaps the cad wasn't hurt much after all," he said; "or perhaps father thought it better to keep the affair quiet."

Though this seemed plausible, the uncertainty of the outcome gave him no rest.

"He's not the best-natured man in the world, even if he is my father," he thought, grimly. "More likely

he's kept the matter quiet so that the detectives may find me the sooner. I really believe he's capable of carrying his resentment that far! At any rate I'm going to take no chances until I'm safe."

Amid such doubts and anxieties the hours dragged wearily on, so that the strain and suspense of the two days' travel made the time seem longer than an entire month at the office.

"Have you ever heard of the Masons?" asked Van Deever of Andy on the second day, when they chanced to be alone in the smoking apartment. Since his arrival in Chicago he had been frequently urged to join the craft. He would probably have done so had not his mind and heart been too full of Margaret Redmond since their first meeting. He thought of this now with some regret, as he realized that in his present plight they would be willing and able to render him good service.

"To be sure I've heard of them," said Andy, looking up in surprise at his master. "When I was a boy I used to think they were some kind of monsters like the dragon killed by St. George. Of late, however, I've had occasion to find out different."

"And what have you discovered?" asked Van Deever, smiling.

"That the Masons are one of the largest and most influential unions in the world. They are able to command all powers and riches and honors and pleasures, to protect and to aid their members and to advance them in the highest walks of life."

"That is just what I think, Andy," agreed his

young master. "I've often been asked to join them, and I'm half-sorry now I didn't."

"Then you'll never be a Catholic, sir. The Church forbids Catholics to join secret societies. No practical Catholic can be a Freemason."

"I've heard something like that before, Andy. What is the meaning of it? And is it the truth? Are you sure of it?"

"Yes, sir. Freemasonry is opposed to Christianity itself, and in particular to the Catholic Church. This is evident to one in touch with the persecution which many of those governments wage against religion and the Church."

"But, Andy, there are a number of Catholics who belong to the Freemasons!"

"They are all excommunicated. The Catholic who joins that society or any other forbidden society, forfeits his rights to the sacraments."

"But why, why?"

"Because, as I have told you, the society is opposed to us. There is a radical antagonism between it and the Catholic Church. It is the world on one hand and Christ on the other. In view of her prohibition no man who understands his religious obligations can be a good Catholic and seek or hold membership in *any* of the societies condemned by her."

Van Deever listened, noting with some surprise the strong note of finality under Andy's words. He respected that fearless Church, which in so many ways defied the powers of evil and darkness, and he was willing to acknowledge, having already accepted so

many of its noble teachings, that there must be a good and sufficient reason for this sweeping denunciation.

"There is also the Order of the Eastern Star, open only to master masons, their wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters. Then there is the Independent Order of Good Templars, which prides itself on being affiliated to the Masons. The Sons of Temperance, the Odd Fellows, and the Pythians, with their ladies' auxiliaries, the Daughters of Rebecca, and the Rathbone Sisters, are all recognized as being promoters of Masonry."

"You surprise me, Andy," said Van Deever. "I have honestly been regretting that I was not a Mason in this present trouble."

"Thank God, you're not!" said Andy. "They might help you, but you'll get along without them. That God who saved Daniel from the lion's den and rescued the three youths from the fiery furnace is watching over you. If it were expedient He would send a legion of angels to protect you, but He expects, at present, that you show of what metal you are made. The way of Calvary is the only way to heaven for a child of God. Won't you take the cross the Saviour gives you?"

"You are right," said Van Deever, in a humble tone. "You have evidently given the subject much thought — and I am willing," he added, resolutely, "to follow the Saviour — even to Calvary. I think I am experiencing just the faintest spark of His desolation."

When the waters of the Rio Grande finally ap-

peared in the distance, Van Deever breathed a sigh of relief. Andy yawned and stretched his weary limbs, and both rejoiced that the tedious journey was drawing to a close. Before seeking a hotel Van Deever sent a brief dispatch to his Chicago lawyers and confidential agents.

"ROGERS & HAWKINS, Rookery Building, Chicago:
"Wire what news immediately. Answer prepaid.
"VAN."

Some hours later the reply arrived that guaranteed the fugitives a night's refreshing sleep.

"Jenkins recovering. Bartholomew and ten clerks resigned. Incident suppressed. House for sale. Office closed. Business transferred to New York.
"ROGERS & HAWKINS."

Before retiring that night Van Deever wrote a long letter to Margaret Redmond, in which he minutely described all that had taken place, from the unfortunate moment of her introduction to his father up to his precipitous flight from Chicago. "Have I not proven my devotion to you?" he concluded, "and yet I am ready, anxious, willing to prove it in any other way that offers."

After ten days, this letter, in which he had breathed forth his whole heart to Margaret, was returned unopened. He sent word to his lawyers, and they informed him that Miss Redmond's house was unoccu-

pied, and that she had left the city suddenly and indefinitely shortly after his own departure; she had given no address at the post office, so that no letters could be forwarded.

Van Deever was plunged into the deepest gloom. He wrote two other letters, hoping that one might reach her, but when both these were returned, he concluded that she had been offended and hurt, and had hidden herself deliberately so that he could find no trace of her. Surely, if this disappearance was not planned by her, Rogers & Hawkins would have been able to discover her whereabouts.

"At least," he thought, the natural generosity of his disposition asserting itself, "though I am unworthy to be her husband, I will repair the loss which she and her mother have sustained through Jenkins and my father."

Though an outcast and disinherited, Webster Van Deever was not by any means a pauper. His father, in the exuberance of his delight on the day he graduated with such high honors, had given him a million dollars in his own right. Then, as partner in the concern, his income had been a considerable one, and so, when he sat down to calmly review his affairs, he found that he was far from penniless. He could easily afford to make reparation to the Redmonds. But on the one hand it was dangerous for him to return to Chicago at this critical time, and on the other the Redmonds had disappeared temporarily, and must be found before anything further could be done.

Webster Van Deever, then, being, as we have said,

primarily a man of business, cast about for a profitable investment that would be free from his father's interference. At first he thought of the oil wells that dot the verdant plains southwest of the Sabine River. Upon careful investigation, however, he concluded that it would be too risky for a man in his circumstances. At last he decided on a fifty thousand acre cattle ranch, and then invested an additional two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in stocking the ranch with the best cattle and making extensive improvements on the property.

CHAPTER XIX

AN ARDENT NEOPHYTE

ON the tract of land which Webster Van Deever acquired upon his arrival in Texas was the historic spot where the saintly Indian missionary, Venerable Anthony Margil, erected the sign of salvation among the poor savages in 1690.

A stone church, built in the old mission style, marks the spot to this day, and is used as a parish church by the Mexicans of Bohia and the surrounding country. Their residence happened to be near this church, and the morning following his arrival at the ranch, Andy, at the conclusion of the services, introduced himself to the aged pastor, Padre Marino. To the surprise of the old Spanish priest, Andy fell on his knees before him.

"Will your reverence give Andy O'Regan your blessing? I've made it a point all my life to look for a church the first thing after moving into a strange place, and form the acquaintance of the pastor. I'm glad we're so near-by, for now I can continue to go to Mass every morning, and may hope to have the priest when I take sick and die."

"The new American family is then Catholic?" asked the pastor, smiling affectionately, as he gave Andy the coveted blessing.

"There's no family, your Reverence," explained Andy. "My master is a Catholic at heart, but has not yet been admitted to the Church. He was taking instructions before we came South," he went on, "but as we departed rather unexpectedly, he was not received before we left. He is anxious to be baptized, and I have no fear for his perseverance, for he says the rosary with me every day. He studies his catechism regularly and — but this is a secret — he worships the noblest Catholic lady I ever saw."

"Ah! That is good!" said the pastor, with a comprehending nod. "Say to your master that if it is convenient old Padre Marino will call on him this afternoon at four o'clock. Give him my compliments, and tell him I thank God he has bought the Bohia ranch. I feel sure he will be kind to my poor Mexicans."

After Andy had returned to his master and delivered the message he tried to describe what he had seen.

"'Pon my word," he said, "it's the queerest place I ever was in. In front of the church two small bells are fastened to the cross-beam of the gate-posts. These bells are stationary, and are rung by means of a rope fastened to the clapper, which is pulled first to one side then to the other. They were originally donated by their majesties Ferdinand and Isabella, to the missions in New Spain, and their names are embossed on them.

"And would you believe it, there isn't a shingle on the roof, nor a window in the wall, nor a board on the floor! The walls, which are very thick and made

of limestone, are arched over on top, just like the bridge crossing the lagoon in Lincoln Park. Up near the top where the walls begin to incline there are several slits in the masonry to permit the light to enter and the air to circulate. I looked for a pew, but there isn't a single one in the whole church. Somehow I managed to kneel on the floor with the rest. While I was waiting for the priest to begin I thought I saw two natives near the altar, a man and a woman in jeans and calico and big straw hats. But when I went into the sacristy after Mass I saw they had a donkey with them and that they were not alive at all, but represented the flight into Egypt. On the altar there's a representation of the Crucifixion. Our Saviour is dressed in a flannel shirt and buckskin trousers, and carries two immense pistols and two bowie knives in His belt. This, I suppose, is the Mexican way of impressing on the cowboys that the Saviour laid down his life *freely* for the salvation of mankind.

"Everything, in fact, about the place gives our religion a strange flavor. Do you know," continued Andy, after a pause, "I was thinking seriously of using half my savings, if necessary, to renovate that church and make it a decent house of God. While I was looking at the building, the natives told me that during the Mexican War the church had been used as a fortification. They actually showed me several holes where cannon balls had partially entered the eight-foot wall. They also brought me to the baptistry in the tower where several Americans had been imprisoned."

Webster Van Deever was charmed with the simplicity and piety of Padre Marino, and became much attached to him during the time the good pastor prepared him for the sacraments. As the thought of Margaret was always in his mind, he resolved to do something that he felt would please her, and at the same time show his appreciation of Padre Marino's kindness. So, while having extensive improvements made on his property he also had the Church del Espiritu Santo renovated.

The walls were frescoed for the first time, and beautiful pictures were hung upon them, representing the various epochs of the history of the parish, from the planting of the mission cross on the banks of the San Antonio River by the saintly Franciscan pioneer, to the restoration of the church under Padre Marino. If the maple floors and oak pews gave the interior a modern appearance they certainly added to the comfort of the faithful. The magnificent high altar and the beautiful stations in bas-relief were objects of special admiration for the simple Mexicans.

Andy insisted on giving the new statues of St. Joseph and Our Lady. To his utter disgust, however, the people expressed their preference for the old statues that wore real clothes, to the new ones with all their artistic workmanship. In remembrance of Margaret, who had always worn a medal of the Sacred Heart, Webster Van Deever procured a fine statue of the Sacred Heart for the niche of the façade above the main entrance. A new font was ordered for the baptistry and a new chime of bells. When the silvery

notes from these fell, for the first time, on the mellow air, sending a cheerful message to the many poor Mexicans scattered over the plains, these simple folk were positive that they had caught an echo from the heavenly psalmody.

After the old mission wall, which had been demolished during the Mexican War, had been finally rebuilt, and the crumbling convent or parochial residence restored, the happy day arrived at last for Webster Van Deever when he was to be made a child of God. The ceremony took place before a large congregation, Andy standing sponsor for his beloved master.

Van Deever seemed a little downhearted, for Margaret Redmond's face haunted him, and he could not put her from his mind. Again and again, Andy cheered him with his jovial speech, and his pictures of a rosy future. "You will still be living happily together long after that suit you promised me will have grown threadbare," he used to say. And when he had exhausted his natural resources and failed in conquering his master's depression, he would break forth into one of his favorite passages of Scripture, to bring home to him the providence of God. "Behold the birds of the air!" he would exclaim, "for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of more value than they? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these. And if the grass of the field which is to-day and to-morrow

is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe: how much more you, O ye of little faith!"

For nine months the neophyte went three times a week to the parochial residence to receive instructions in the faith that daily grew more dear to him.

"And now," said Padre Marino, when they had concluded the final lesson, "I want to add a few words to induce you to approach the sacraments frequently.

"First, in regard to confession. A merciful God instituted the Sacrament of Penance primarily to reconcile the repentant sinner and secondarily to aid him in ascending to perfection. The earthly pilgrim may misuse the sacrament in two ways: by overdoing the examination, and by being wanting in the spirit of penance. In preparing for confession he may devote too much time and attention to his examination of conscience, and so not only consume his limited energy unwisely, but also develop a supersensitive anxiety, which we call scrupulosity. When a person's attention is thus chiefly centered on the past, true sorrow for sin is paralyzed and the purpose of amendment usually miscarries. Self-examination, indeed, grounds us in humility, but the conversion of the heart or the spirit of penance is also essential to salvation. In the last analysis we can not have the evidence of sense or reason, which weak souls foolishly seek by over-examination. On our earthly pilgrimage we must be content with the evidence of faith. Whenever our confession is entire this evidence dispels our anxiety about the past, consoles us in the present, and gives us courage to battle in the future.

"As some persons do not derive the proper help and encouragement from the confessional because they do not humbly submit to the guidance of their director, so others impede the grace and efficacy of this sacrament by neglecting to ground themselves in the spirit of penance. Like the nine lepers who did not give thanks to God, they content themselves with sacramental reconciliation. Confession is only an act; penance, to be efficacious, must be a habit. Confession is soon over; but the virtue of penance must remain. It is the surest safeguard against relapse, and an essential requisite for perseverance. When the spirit of penance broadens and deepens, the earthly pilgrim regrets not only his own defects but also the faults of others. It impels him to make reparation, and console the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the impiety with which the world receives His favors.

"Holy Communion is the divine alchemy that transforms us into the living children of God. Even after we are born again of water and the Holy Ghost, the human elements remain. We are still as helpless in the spiritual life as infants in their mothers' arms. From the cradle to physical perfection is a long and tedious development. But the transformation of the natural man to the perfection of the sonship of God is so long and tedious a process, that few, alas! have the sincere good will to attain it! Why are there so many infants, so many dwarfs and cripples in the spiritual life? Why so many suffering from the palsy? why so many spiritual dyspeptics? Because they try to attain the perfection of sons and daughters of their

heavenly Father without the use or the proper use of this wonderful transformer.

"Now, Mr. Van Deever, I have reason to hope that you will not be one to faint by the wayside of life. I have reason to think that you will increase daily in spirituality, till you attain the full stature of a son of God, even as you have already arrived at man's estate in the natural order.

"As long as you beware of the mists of delusion on the one hand, and the intoxicating influence of self-love on the other, you will easily mistrust your natural strength and place all your confidence in God. If, then, you nourish your soul with the daily Bread of the Lord, your spiritual mind will gradually see more clearly the things of God; your will expand with generosity, and your heart be inflamed with love for God."

Shortly after Webster Van Deever had become Webster Joseph Van Deever, and had begun to appreciate the value of frequent Communion he was delighted to hear that the Venerable Vicar-Apostolic of Brownsville would soon arrive at Bohia to administer to him and to others of the faithful the Sacrament of Confirmation. While he was preparing himself for this, the Mexicans, who had learned to love and revere him during his residence in their midst, under pretext of making suitable preparations to welcome the Bishop, devised a grand ovation for their common benefactor. Among them were many who had not been to church since their baptism or marriage, but who, stirred by Van Deever's fervor, now resolved

to imitate his example. So, on the day preceding His Lordship's arrival the Mexicans began to pour into the village from all sides. Some came on their ponies, others on mules and donkeys, others in cumbersome wagons, while whole families walked fifty miles or more to take part in the demonstration, and assist at the solemn ceremony.

It was, indeed, a day not easily to be forgotten, bringing to the minds of many the history of the early triumphs of the Church in Texas. The venerable bishop, who knew by experience the joys and trials of a missionary, declared, at the dinner-table, "Since the time when the Americans were invited to settle in the province over one hundred years ago, I believe there has never been such religious enthusiasm among the Mexicans as we have witnessed here to-day."

On their return from escorting the bishop to the train the following morning Van Deever turned to Andy with moist eyes.

"I have gone through much in the past eleven months, but I would not exchange the happiness I now feel for anything this side of heaven. If only Margaret Redmond were here with me to share it! I little thought when I left the University two years ago or even when I went to the coast a year ago that there was such joy in store for me."

"Indeed," said Andy, and there were tears in his own kind old eyes, "we have many things to be thankful for."

"I don't understand how God can be so lavish in His goodness to me," said Van Deever.

"Because you have shown good will," said Andy. "You followed the light of truth when you saw it. There are too many, like Pilate, to turn away from truth. If they did not, the evidences of God's goodness would be far more manifest."

CHAPTER XX

THE CONVENT

UPON their arrival in Baltimore the Redmonds received a most cordial welcome from all their relatives. Of many of her kindred Margaret had never heard, and so was surprised and pleased to meet so many people at the family reunion held at the Wilson residence. All vied with one another in expressing their sympathy to Mrs. Redmond in her illness, and assured her that she would certainly recover her health in Baltimore. Having heard from Mrs. Wilson of Margaret's pluck and energy, they regarded her as a sort of heroine and were enthusiastic in their affection and admiration. If Margaret had any regrets at leaving Chicago, ample compensation was offered her in the delightful parties and entertainments that were now prepared in her honor.

When she received Genevieve's first letter, which told her of the sacrifices Webster Van Deever had willingly made for her sake, she realized how unjust she had been, and shed bitter tears of sorrow and compassion. She would have written to him at once, but she knew nothing of his whereabouts. Again and again she urged Genevieve to set her ingenious wits to work to find trace of him. In her distress she made a novena to St. Anthony, the patron of all things lost.

But this time Genevieve failed her utterly. "If the earth had opened and swallowed him alive he could not have disappeared more effectually," wrote her friend. Even St. Anthony, who is usually so prompt and obliging, seemed deaf to his suppliant's request.

As was predicted, Mrs. Redmond rallied perceptibly. With the evident improvement in her mother's condition, Margaret's longing for Chicago became stronger every day. After being entertained on all sides for five weeks, they finally arranged to depart in the last week of May.

But when the time came Mrs. Redmond's strength suddenly failed. Since the attack of the grippe she had been quite feeble; now an affection of the heart supervened and her condition became critical. The doctors looked grave and held a consultation — the priest was sent for and administered the last Sacraments.

Mrs. Redmond alone maintained her composure, although her many friends looked grave and troubled. It was Mrs. Wilson who informed her sister of the slight chance there was for her recovery.

She smiled serenely and clasped her hands together.

"I shall not be obliged to return to Chicago, then! May God's holy will be done!"

Poor Margaret could not restrain her tears, but knelt beside the bed, weeping bitterly.

"Don't cry, my darling. I am going to join your father, gladly, joyfully. I will tell him all you have been to me — I have thanked God every day of my life

that He gave you to us. When I am gone, do not take what is left of me away — let me stay with the old people in the family lot here. Dear child, I am only going a little in advance. Soon we shall be united and no Van Deever can ever come between us."

She touched her daughter's head caressingly a few moments.

"I want you to go back to dear St. Mary's when I am gone — I consecrated you to the Sacred Heart, so perhaps Our Lord will deign to number you among the servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Try, at any rate, and if you have the vocation —"

Her gentle voice failed her.

"I want you to kiss me good-by — just as you used to kiss me when you left for school in the morning. That is it! Now I am content! I bless you, my dear child, with the abundance of a mother's love! May God bless you with the blessing that a good mother can not give!" Her face lit up with an angelic smile.

"I see the heavens open! I see your father, Margaret!" she exclaimed, as if in an ecstasy. "The Sacred Heart of Jesus welcomes me! His Mother is at His side! His angels come to receive my soul! I come, I come!" she cried faintly, raising her feeble arms. "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, into your hands I commend my spirit!" and dropping one hand on Margaret's bowed head she gave her soul to God.

. . . . . .

For weeks after her mother's death, Margaret was melancholy and depressed. Her people did all they

could to comfort her, but her loss was so sudden and so unexpected that it crushed her for the time being — a weight she was not able to bear. She realized all that her mother had been to her, and felt her loss most keenly. Even the greatest saints felt the ills of life, and Jesus Himself wept at the grave of Lazarus. Though she had been a faithful daughter, and there was nothing on her conscience with which she might reproach herself, yet she suffered now an agony of desolation, none the less keen because it was borne in resignation to the divine will. In this crisis she received a letter from Mother Lionella of St. Mary's, which brought peace to her aching heart.

During the six months she remained in Baltimore she made her home with her aunt and aided her in her household duties. Every morning she went to Mass in the neighboring St. Matthew's Church and received Holy Communion frequently. Thus time and grace combined to assuage her sorrow, and perfect her character. As the Christmas holidays approached, Margaret finally yielded to the persistent invitations of her friend Genevieve to return to Chicago. A letter, containing a mysterious hint, induced her even to hasten the day of her departure. On her way she stopped over at St. Mary's long enough to thank Mother Lionella for the consolation she had given her. She also told the good nun of her mother's dying wish, and that while not sure of having a vocation, she had felt often that she could be happy in the religious life. Having no one in the world with claims on her, she would, therefore, with Mother Lionella's consent, dis-

pose of her few belongings and return to St. Mary's. Perhaps God would condescend to allow her to dedicate her life to His service. Knowing the strength of Margaret's character and her well-balanced brain, Mother Lionella felt that she would indeed be a worthy nun if she felt called to the life, and gave her every encouragement to enter, on trial at any rate.

On her return to Chicago, Margaret learned something of the great surprise which Genevieve had in store for her. After greeting her affectionately, and without waiting to indulge in much chatter, Genevieve drew an envelope from her pocket and handed it to her friend.

"Read it!" she said.

Margaret took the envelope, looked at it as if to divine its secret, then opened it suspiciously, while Genevieve with smiling lips, impatiently repeated her command.

"Oh, you rogue!" exclaimed Margaret, dropping the envelope and throwing her arms about her friend while she kissed her heartily. Then picking up the note again, she read aloud:

Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Harty
request the honor of your presence
at the marriage of their daughter
Genevieve Agnes
to
Mr. Francis Reginald Hingston
Tuesday morning, January thirteenth
One thousand nine hundred and three

at nine o'clock
St. Timothy's Church
Chicago, Ill.

"And you are to be bridesmaid, Margaret!" declared Genevieve. "The ceremony was to have taken place in September, but we postponed it until after the holidays just to have you with us."

"O Genevieve, how good of you!" said Margaret. "It is such a surprise. I never thought of you in connection with Mr. Hingston or anybody else. I wish you joy," she added then, with great earnestness, "and I will pray that Our Lord will shower the blessings on your life which you so richly deserve. But," she added, with concern, "do you think — I mean can I be bridesmaid while mourning for my mother?"

"I kept the news from you because I was so anxious to surprise you," said Genevieve, "but I thought of this before. I asked Father Dinneen, and he said that, under the circumstances, you would not be lacking in respect for your mother's memory if you did your old friend this favor."

"In that case I'll be more than delighted," said Margaret, gently.

"And it may serve as the preparation for a more elaborate ceremony later on, when Webster Van Deever returns," said Genevieve, mischievously.

In spite of her efforts at self-possession, the tears stood in Margaret's eyes and her face was very pale.

"Poor Webster!" she said, in a low tone. "How I misjudged him! How noble, how unselfish he was!

Something has happened to him — I do not think we will ever hear from him again. Besides," she added, " I have tried to think of the future my mother would have chosen for me. Carrying out her last request I shall return to Monroe after your marriage. Life within the dear convent may prove to me that I really have a vocation: perhaps that is why all human props are being taken from me."

Genevieve could not speak, but with tears streaming down her cheeks, kissed her dear friend again and again. In her New Year's greeting Mother Lionella again urged Margaret " like a dove in the clefts of the rock, to seek refuge from the storms of the world within the convent walls." Her voice then was the will of God, and as soon as her small property was disposed of and Genevieve married, Margaret set out for St. Mary's-on-the-Raisin, confident of finding rest and peace in the company of one who had often been her consoler in her childhood days.

On the following feast of Purification, Margaret Redmond took up the duties of a postulant. She was grave and reserved — a great contrast to her light-hearted associates, who, once the pangs of homesickness had worn away, were exuberantly happy at the thought of becoming spouses of Christ. Margaret had drained her cup of sorrow with the Master in Gethsemane, and now seemed to share with Him the consolation of ministering angels. By the sweetness of her ways, and her exactness in following the daily exercises, she soon won the admiration and affection of the entire community.

Rising every morning at five o'clock, the postulants and novices make their meditation in common with the community, and then assist at Mass and receive Holy Communion. After thanksgiving or prayer in private for another half hour, they repair to the refectory for breakfast, which is taken in silence. One hour is then given to manual labor, sweeping and dusting the convent, making the beds and washing the dishes. Then follow a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the recitation of the Rosary and the Little Office, the Way of the Cross, a spiritual reading, and a conference by the mistress of novices. In the afternoon the aspirants again pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, recite the rest of the Little Office of our blessed Lady, and make a private spiritual reading and meditation. During the hour of recreation after dinner and supper, the merry laughter of the aspirants reechoes through the halls and corridors, and, in the absence of the novice mistress, at times rivals the more noisy recreations of the boarders. With the exception of Thursdays and extraordinary recreation days, this is the daily life, which Margaret described eloquently to her old friend.

CHAPTER XXI

RESTITUTION

WHEN the time arrived for Webster Van Deever to dispose of his stock, he found that the experience he had gained and the acquaintances he had formed in the Chicago office were now of great advantage in discovering the most favorable time for shipping, as well as in securing the highest price for his cattle. After he had paid all his expenses and balanced his accounts he found a net gain of twenty per cent. on his investment. Though this was smaller than the gain in the Chicago office, the young man was content.

"It has cost me very little labor," he said, "and no qualms of conscience. Besides," he added, "this life in Texas is a wonderful tonic. It has taught me to take an interest in mankind."

The one harassing thought, the one that was ever present, was that he had now been an entire year away from Chicago and that he had heard no word from Margaret Redmond, nor could his lawyer seem to discover any trace of her.

"I don't see anything strange in that," said Andy, "for you can't tell how you have been misrepresented to her. But I have no doubt that if she once cared for you, she does so still. One of her character does

not fall in love easily — and when she does her love is the kind that sticks."

"Andy, you give me so much encouragement," said Webster Van Deever, delight in his tones. "I have never told you, acquainted as you are with all my affairs, one of the chief reasons why I must find Miss Redmond. I discovered a certain paragraph in our family history the day we left Chicago. While I was still at the University, Philip Redmond, the young lady's father, was a Chicago broker, and for a time conducted a successful business in the very office we occupied last year. During the crisis he borrowed a hundred thousand dollars from Jenkins, my father's agent, to cover an investment and save himself from financial loss. Instead of giving him an honest deal, it was the very chance that dad and Jenkins had been waiting for. They pushed him to the wall, foreclosed on him, confiscated his property, and finally took possession. All this to give me a start in life. Philip Redmond died of a broken heart, and left his family penniless."

"There's neither luck nor blessing on that kind of work," said Andy, earnestly.

"I think dad has partly discovered that," said Webster Van Deever, grimly. "The rest of the story you know, Andy — at least almost all of it. When I met Miss Redmond first she exercised a great fascination over me. I went to the coast to try to get rid of the thought of her, but couldn't. When I first engaged her to work for us she recognized the office as her father's, and then in explanation of her emotion, told

me of his sufferings and of how he had been brought to his grave by unscrupulous rivals. My admiration for her increased as I learned to know her more intimately. I began to study her faith, and I was on the point of joining the Church when my father arrived. You know what happened then. Now, though I may never hope to win Miss Redmond, I feel bound to make restitution to her and to her family, as far as lies in my power, even if I was not a party to the crime and profited little by it."

"God will reward you for your generosity and good-will by blessing your marriage to her," said Andy, in heartfelt tones.

"Since you're so sure," said Van Deever, "how would it be if you went to Chicago and tried to find Miss Redmond and her mother for me? I have the money ready, and whether she is willing to marry me or not, I want to make restitution. I dread the idea of sharing in the curse of a sin that cries to heaven for vengeance."

"I think I've a better plan than that," said Andy. "I'm a bit too old to be making love to a charming girl, and yet love is the best detective. Jenkins is in New York, and you have nothing to fear from him, so I think you ought to go yourself. I'll be glad to go with you and call on old friends. There's one we'll both miss, and that's Father Morrin. God rest him, the papers say he wore himself out for his people."

This suggestion pleased Van Deever, and he resolved to set out the next day, which they did, followed by Padre Marino's blessing and good wishes.

"Before doing anything else I'd look up that Miss Harty, who was Miss Redmond's friend," said Andy, shrewdly. "And then perhaps, Father Dinneen, who was Miss Redmond's pastor, and who, I understand, has been made pastor of Father Morrin's church."

Van Deever did not like to confess, even to himself, how stupid this suggestion of Andy's made him feel. He could not understand why Miss Harty's name had not occurred to him before. As soon as they arrived at the hotel, Van Deever consulted the city directory. To his disappointment neither the Redmonds nor Genevieve Harty were to be found mentioned among the residents. But he discovered, with some satisfaction, that the Harty family still lived at the house where he had brought Genevieve one Sunday afternoon over a year before.

When he arrived there soon after, Mrs. Harty looked at him rather suspiciously, and expressed her surprise that one who professed to be an old friend did not know that Genevieve had been married four months previously.

Van Deever then explained that he had only just returned to the city after an absence of thirteen months, and that he had agreeable news to communicate to her. Mrs. Harty finally informed him that he might find her by calling on Mrs. Hingston on Jackson Boulevard. Van Deever was too preoccupied to take any notice of the number to which he had been directed, until the automobile stopped before the very residence he had formerly called his home. The thought that Margaret's old friend lived here inspired

him with confidence, though many were the conflicting emotions that welled up in his soul.

Mrs. Hingston was seated at the window reading a letter when Webster Van Deever arrived. The stopping of the automobile aroused her, and looking out she recognized the young man instantly. A cry of unbounded surprise passed her lips — then hastening to the front door, she threw it open hurriedly and welcomed the young man with both hands extended:

"You!" she exclaimed in sheer delight. Then, with a touch of her mischievous manner: "In the absence of the father, permit me to extend a cordial welcome to the prodigal son!"

They shook hands heartily, and he followed her into the big room he remembered so well.

"Where in the world have you been? What happened?" she demanded instantly. "Margaret and I were fairly aching to meet you and talk things over, but all our efforts to find you have been in vain."

"You tried to find me?" asked Van Deever. "That's odd. I have had my lawyers search all Chicago for the Redmonds."

"Honestly?" cried Genevieve. "It would have been an easier matter if you had tried to locate me."

"I never thought of you until my good old Andy spoke of you a short while ago," said Van Deever; "and indeed this may have been due to the fact that I felt you would influence Margaret against me after that unfortunate scene with my father."

"Why!" exclaimed Genevieve. "How could you imagine anything like that! But pardon me a mo-

ment," she added, "I must telephone Mr. Hingston — he has been so interested in all I could tell him about you and Margaret." When she hung up the receiver she found Van Deever full of inquiries concerning Miss Redmond. But before giving him the information he so ardently desired Genevieve resolved to discover if his sentiments were unchanged.

"Margaret is very well," she answered, evasively, "but she is out of town at present. You have heard, I daresay, that she went to Baltimore with her mother last year, in the hopes that the latter might fully recover her health. Mrs. Redmond died, however, and was buried there in the family lot."

"I heard nothing, nothing!" said Van Deever, vehemently. "I am sorry to learn that, very, very sorry. And I sympathize with Margaret, for I know what she and her mother were to each other. I have been living in an out-of-the-way spot in Texas, where I joined the Church since I left," he explained.

"Margaret came back to Chicago to be my bridesmaid," said Genevieve, taking compassion on his evident distress. "After that she went to St. Mary's — the convent where she was educated."

"Don't you see how you are torturing me?" exclaimed Van Deever. "Tell me where she is now. In the convent, you said? She has entered the convent? Then I must be content to make reparation for the wrong done to her and to her people by my father —"

"I'm afraid Margaret would not be satisfied with such a settlement."

"What more can I do?" he said, despondently. "Suggest anything else you think —"

"I remember that when Margaret offered you her Bible you refused any gift from her that did not include the donor," said Genevieve, roguishly. "And I'm afraid that is just the way Margaret will feel toward you. She won't want to accept anything from you that does not include — the giver! Wait!" as Van Deever stared at her in a dazed way, "you must read this letter, which came to me this morning. You will then understand just what I mean."

Webster Van Deever took the letter with trembling fingers. Genevieve's information had stunned him — he felt too miserable and unhappy to glean any consolation from her laughing manner. With some perturbation he straightened out the sheet, and read the words inscribed upon it.

"DEAR GENEVIEVE: — Mother Lionella and I had a long and serious talk last evening. She told me that if I felt so disposed, she would allow me to take the habit on August fifteenth.

"I have been living in a world of doubt for the past month, and her words have proved to me, positively, that I am not destined for the religious life. It is a happy, peaceful life, God knows, and I dread the very thought of going out into the world, battling with its many temptations, and, worse, still, wrestling a living from it, which is so hard on a girl who is all alone, as I am. But this consideration would never permit me to pledge myself to a vocation to which God

has not called me, and for which I feel myself absolutely unworthy. I can not give Him an undivided service. I must face the battle once more.

"This morning I went to Monsignor and told him my whole history, and especially the entire state of my mind since coming here. He has been spiritual director of the convent for nearly fifty years, and is revered as a saint by the Sisters. I am afraid I was very much agitated — for I fear the future so much!

"'Be calm, my dear child,' she said, 'you are not called to the convent. When God has tried you sufficiently He will reward you — both you and this man of whom you speak. He will bless you both for your fidelity.'

"Dear Genevieve, I have never breathed a prayer for those dear to me that I have not included Webster Van Deever's name. I can not forget him. I know that wherever he is, or whatever has happened to him, that he is still noble, unselfish, and true to me. That I will hear from him, I am positive — for God will not keep us apart forever.

"I shall let you know my arrangements later. Now that I have decided, I must plan for the future, but of course I want to consult with Mother Lionella first, and be guided by her wherever possible. Until then, when you think of me, breathe a little prayer to the Sacred Heart for your

"MARGARET REDMOND."

When Mr. Hingston entered the parlor a few minutes later, he was astonished to find that both his wife and Webster Van Deever had been weeping.

CHAPTER XXII

WEDDING-BELLS

AFTER Webster Van Deever had discussed the happenings of the past year with Genevieve and her husband, he expressed his pleasure at finding them in possession of the house which he had hoped would be Margaret's home. He thanked them over and over for all they had done for her, and for him, too, and gave them a brief description of his new ranch in Texas.

He then declared his intention of setting out immediately for the historic town in Michigan, which prides itself on possessing one of the finest educational institutions in the land. Both Genevieve and her husband were cordially sincere in wishing him the success which they felt he deserved, and as they accompanied him to the door, Genevieve remarked laughingly:

"If you invite us to the wedding I shall forgive you for not letting us hear from you for a year."

"I hope I may presume on Margaret's permission to extend an invitation now," replied the young man, with a smile of pleasure that lighted up his whole countenance. When he returned to the hotel Van Deever was in such good humor that Andy understood the cause immediately.

"Thanks be to God, you have found her!" he remarked, fervently.

"Yes, Andy," said Van Deever. "I found her, although she isn't in Chicago. And I have also found that everything is all right."

"I knew it would turn out like this," said Andy, shaking his master's hand. "The Lord is not to be outdone in generosity."

"Thank you, Andy," said Van Deever. "I fear I shall never be able to show my gratitude sufficiently to you for your sympathy and encouragement, but at least I shall have the pleasure of seeing you best man at the wedding. Charge everything you buy while here to my account, and see that your new suit will be one that will not grow threadbare soon. I'm going to leave for Monroe to-night — I can't leave any too soon. You can do as you please until you hear from me. Visit your old friends, but leave word as to your whereabouts at the old home on Jackson Boulevard, where Mrs. Hingston, Margaret's dear friend, now lives, so that I will be able to reach you."

At an early hour the following morning Van Deever arrived in the Floral City. He had learned the value of frequent reception of Holy Communion — so he resolved to assist at Mass and receive before the interview with Margaret. He accordingly went to St. Mary's Church, which is near the hotel and opposite the convent. After going to confession, he knelt in a front pew in one of the side aisle, reflecting on the goodness of God and the wonderful ways of His providence.

A little while later a Sister and a young lady entered the church and in a few moments the priest came out on the altar to say Mass. Van Deever was too occupied with his devotions to notice that it was a Mass of requiem, much less did he imagine that any one could be near in whom he was interested. Imagine, therefore, the surprise of the two young people, who advanced from opposite sides of the church to kneel at the altar rail! The saints of God have been favored at times, with raptures, and on other occasions have had visions. At the anniversary Mass of requiem which was being said for Mrs. Redmond, both Webster and Margaret were positive they experienced both.

Good Mother Lionella grasped the situation immediately. She whispered a few words to Margaret when Mass was over, and then approached Van Deever.

"Margaret received your telegram this morning. I wish you would come with us to the convent for breakfast."

Breakfast was a failure as far as Margaret was concerned — she could make but a faint effort at eating, but her lover was almost eloquent, and ate like a famished wolf. Good Mother Lionella poured the coffee, sympathizing with the young people in her heart, but unable to set them at their ease, since everything she said or did seemed to embarrass them the more.

"The poor things! May God bless them — but it's the first time in my life I ever felt awkward

trying to make others happy," said the good nun, reproaching herself, as they left the breakfast table.

As they strolled through the college park, the flush faded from Margaret's cheeks and she gradually regained her composure. Van Deever had resolved to be extremely careful — the slightest blunder might hurt his suit now, and he could not afford that, he felt, while Margaret was so overwhelmed by this answer to her prayers that she might be able to decide her future, so awed as she seemed to trace the hand of God in her earthly destiny, that she could only retreat behind a barrier of silence, since speech seemed useless.

They wandered, therefore, without exchanging a single word, to the suspension bridge which connects the park with the beautiful little island which here divides the waters of the Raisin, just before they begin to dance down the rapids. They crossed the bridge and approached a bench that stood beneath a spreading elm. Here they seated themselves, facing the convent to the east, while the high tower of St. Michael's Church, on the opposite bank, seemed like a sentinel standing guard, to ward off all enemies of their happiness.

And now Margaret ventured to take a good look at her lover.

"You are very much sunburned," she said shyly. "Where have you been — since then?"

She had no need to say another word.

"On a ranch in Texas," he answered. He hesitated for a moment, as if weighing a certain risk.

"Had you known — perhaps you would not have written that precious letter which Mrs. Hingston showed me yesterday?" He spoke with great deliberation, his gaze fastened imploringly upon her.

Margaret blushed a vivid scarlet, and was silent an instant, staring at the ground. Then lifting her beautiful eyes to his face, she said, in firm, clear tones:

"I did not think you would see that letter. But — I would have written it though I knew you to be an outcast and a beggar."

"Thank you, my dearest Margaret," said Van Deever, his voice trembling. "And now may I have the kiss which once before you refused me?"

And thus they pledged their troth for life.

After a while Van Deever took a ring set with a sparkling diamond from his pocket and slipped it on Margaret's finger.

"The last time I spoke to you you asked me for a short vacation," he said, humorously. "I have now come to tell you that your vacation has expired. You must come back to me for life this time. If you do not like Texas we will find a home elsewhere. To win you, Margaret, has been the one absorbing thought of my life since that unfortunate (or shall I call it fortunate now?) incident at the Charity Ball."

To Margaret's delight and pleasure the young man then proceeded to describe his Texas home in eloquent terms, adding that it would be a perfect paradise if she could induce a little band of the nuns of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to accompany them, and open a school in Bohia for all the children of the sur-

rounding country. Now that they had found speech there was much to tell and hear, hidden thoughts and feelings to be confessed, as well as incidents to be related of their year of separation.

"How soon can we be married?" asked Van Deever.

"The banns must be published on three successive Sundays," explained Margaret. "So it can be as soon after that as you please."

"Why the delay?" began Van Deever, in some disappointment.

"It is prescribed by the Church in order to discover whether any impediments exist," said Margaret, gently, "and though this is not necessary for us, nevertheless, it is the presage of every honorable marriage, and I believe in complying with all the rules — especially when we are beginning a new life together."

"You are right," agreed Van Deever. "We shall have the banns published, then, in your old parish as well as mine on the next three Sundays."

So, since Margaret had no objection to offer to this plan they decided to be married on Tuesday, June the twenty-third.

"And the things that I need I will have made by the Good Shepherd nuns in Detroit," said Margaret.

The Angelus bell finally warned them that it was time to return to the convent. Mother Lionella was somewhat alarmed at Margaret's protracted absence, but when they returned, beaming with joy, and the good Mother saw the ring sparkling on the young girl's hand, she understood, and smiled with satisfac-

tion. They told her of the date set for the ceremony, whereupon Mother Lionella insisted that they obtain permission to be married in the convent chapel. Thus it came to pass that the sanctuary which had witnessed so many virgins consecrate themselves to their heavenly Spouse, now saw two children of God vow fidelity to each other in the battle of life.

Even after the present generation has passed away, the students of St. Mary's College will refer to June 23, 1903, as a memorable day in the annals of the institute. During the time that intervened before her marriage Margaret remained at the convent as Mother Lionella's guest. Webster Van Deever returned to Chicago, where he unblushingly monopolized Mrs. Hingston's whole time and attention in selecting many things that both thought would please Margaret in her new home.

At an early hour, before the bridegroom and the wedding-guests arrived from Chicago, the students assisted at holy Mass and received a Communion of devotion for the welfare of the one who had so endeared herself to them. At eight o'clock they assembled again in the spacious chapel, some in the choir above, others in the pews below, but all most anxious to witness the unusual ceremony. One of the students, Katharine Mildred Harty, a younger sister of Margaret's bosom friend, was bridesmaid, while Sister Seraphine, Margaret's former music-teacher, obtained permission to sing an *Ave Maria* at the Offertory.

Words can not describe the feeling of expectancy

that was plainly visible when the grand organ began to peal forth the notes of Mendelssohn's wedding-march. Margaret was dressed in white silk, and wore a veil which trailed to the floor, fastened to her hair with a crown of sparkling jewels. She wore, too, a necklace of pearls from which depended a beautiful gold medal of the Sacred Heart, and carried in her hand a bouquet of American Beauties. These she deposited in front of the statue of the Sacred Heart before advancing to the altar. The tall, well-developed figure of the happy husband-to-be towered above the bride like a mighty oak as they entered the chapel, preceded by Miss Harty and Andy O'Regan. A murmur of admiration swept through the chapel as they appeared. The first glance of admiration was for Margaret and Webster. Then the eyes of all were fastened on Andy, who appeared in an entire buckskin suit and carried an immense sombrero in his hand, while his long, silvery locks swept gracefully to his shoulders! This unusual and striking spectacle did not escape the wondering vision of many of the good nuns, who later on accused themselves in chapter of a want of mortification of the eyes. There was breathless silence when the aged Monsignor pronounced the contracting parties husband and wife — and the ceremony proceeded with more devotion than is usually manifested on such occasions.

When it was over, and they had received the congratulations of their friends, Mr. and Mrs. Webster Joseph Van Deever had breakfast with the venerable Monsignor, and then quietly departed on an extended wedding-tour to the Thousand Islands.

CHAPTER XXIII

HAPPY MARRIAGES ARE MADE IN HEAVEN

BEFORE going on their honeymoon, Margaret obtained a general free day for the pupils from Mother Lionella, while Webster provided an elaborate banquet in the college park for Sisters, students, and visitors. When the young man first broached this plan, the good nun demurred on account of the expense, but this objection was soon overcome, and she entered heartily into his plans. If anything additional had been needed to fix the remembrance of Margaret's wedding indelibly in the minds of the young ladies, this banquet was certainly calculated to produce that effect.

Some days previous the grounds were prepared, and tables and benches arranged among the trees and shrubbery so as to face the pavilion, which had been gaily decorated. On the morning of the wedding-day the caterers arrived, with all the paraphernalia needed to give the scene a gala air. When everything was completed, a big bouquet of American Beauties was placed in the center of every table, and a menu at every plate, which was elaborately decorated and ornamented, and bore also the photographs of Margaret and Webster on the front cover.

Andy O'Regan and Katharine Harty, in the absence of the happy pair, occupied the seats of honor on the pavilion, with Mr. and Mrs. Hingston as the chief guests. One of the tables had been kept for the little orphan girls from the private Home which the Sisters maintain out of gratitude to God for preserving them from the plague over fifty years ago. The college orchestra and glee club played and sang appropriate selections. Thus song and laughter and music made all oblivious of the flight of time.

Finally, however, toward the close of the banquet, when dessert had already been served, one of the little orphans unwittingly caused a change in the program. Some one had just finished a popular song, and the hand-clapping had barely subsided, when this little girl suddenly left the table around which the orphans were assembled, and running up the steps of the pavilion, climbed confidently on Andy's knee.

"I know who you are now, St. Hubert! We have your picture in our home!"

Every eye was turned upon the two, and a shout of applause ascended from the assemblage that reverberated from the grove, and re-echoed from the opposite bank of the river — reminding some of the older inhabitants of the town of the story their grandparents had told them of the dreadful Indian war-cry, when the savages were lured by English gold during the war of 1812 to perpetuate on this very spot the dreadful Raisin massacre.

The child, a little frightened, clung to Andy.

"Don't be afraid, dear," he said, in a soothing tone.

"They cheer because they feel happy — and we're happy, too, aren't we?"

This interruption served to break up the formality of the feast. The students began to dance about the grounds, the Sisters gathered in little groups, while Genevieve introduced her husband to those of her old teachers who had not yet met him. The orphans followed their leader up to the pavilion and crowded around Andy, pleading with "St. Hubert" to tell them a story. The younger boarders followed, and some of the older ones. Andy declined, laughingly, to tell a story, on the plea that he didn't know any.

"Please tell us the story of your master's courtship," suggested a young lady.

"Yes — tell us how Webster Van Deever and Margaret Redmond came to marry," pleaded another.

"They came to marry," said Andy, "because it was the holy will of God. And they are going to be happy, too."

"But how did they meet each other and where, and what made them fall in love?" demanded another voice. Poor old Andy threw up his hands in despair.

"And how do you know I know anything about it?" he asked.

"Oh, we are positive of it!"

"Well, then, I can only give you a few of the details."

"Let us hear them, let us hear them!" they cried, in chorus, and much embarrassed, Andy plunged into a hurried recital.

"Miss Redmond was born in Chicago of splendid Catholic parents. Webster Van Deever was born in New York, coming from a stock that always preferred the certain things of this life to the uncertain ones of the life to come," he began. "They met at a ball to which Miss Redmond had gone, accompanied by her mother and an old friend, and here the young lady and my master had a serious misunderstanding. This would have ended the matter in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases, but Mr. Van Deever had been forced to admire the Catholic girl's beautiful character. So he observed her more closely and gradually came to respect her faith, the teachings of which he saw exemplified in her daily life. The more he learned the more he esteemed her religion for its own sake.

"Just then his father appeared on the scene, ordering his son to give up the young lady immediately. He refused and was disinherited, and after a quarrel with his father's confidential agent, which might have turned out disastrously, Mr. Van Deever became a fugitive.

"When the storm had blown over he came back to Chicago to find the young lady who had won his heart. Through the kindness of Mrs. Hingston, he discovered her. So we are able to celebrate a marriage today that was surely made in heaven! Let us give three cheers for Margaret Redmond's influence!"

They were given with a will.

"And now three cheers for Mr. Van Deever's sincerity!"

Again a volume of sound rent the air that made the good Sisters tremble.

"And three cheers for Mr. and Mrs. Van Deever on their wedding-day," persisted Andy.

"And, finally, three cheers for Mr. and Mrs. Hingston!" which were given with increasing ardor. After which all stood up and cheered more strenuously than ever for Andy O'Regan.

But at this Andy left the pavilion abruptly, escorted by the orphans, with the expressed intention of visiting the Home to see the picture of St. Hubert.

. . . . . .

Genevieve and her husband had been amused listeners to Andy's brief description of Margaret's influence and Webster's pertinacity. They returned to Chicago that afternoon, and the white-haired "St. Hubert," a name which seemed inclined to stick to him, accompanied them. They liked this earnest and pious old man and had besought him to make his home with them while he remained in Chicago, which would be until Webster and Margaret returned.

"Do you really believe, Andy," said Frank Hingston, seriously, when the three were seated in the train — he liked nothing better than drawing the old man out and listening to his odd expressions —"that happy marriages are made in heaven?"

"I am sure of it," said Andy. "I'm sixty-eight years old, and I've heard some sermons during those years, and read some books, and made some observations."

"And these lead you to this conclusion?"

"They lead me to believe that God is good and deserving of all confidence," said Andy, "and that amounts to the same thing. God's care extends to the minutest affairs of human life. A mother, teaching her little one to walk, will place it at the farther end of the room and coax it to come to her. So God, creating us for heaven, places us in this valley of tears, and does all He can to allure us to live as His children during this fleeting life, so that we may be able to walk well in the kingdom of heaven."

"That's a nice way of looking at it," said Frank Hingston, seriously. "I never thought of it in that way before, Andy."

"Consider the birds of the air, the lilies of the field! Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these — and if God does so clothe the grass of the field and provide for the birds of the air, how much more is He interested in us who are made to His own image and likeness? Not a sparrow falls from the housetop, not a hair from your head, without God's knowledge and consent! Now, if God takes so much interest in what we call trivial matters, how much more must He be interested in weighty things?

"Some men He calls to the sublime vocation of administering His mercies and His blessings to mankind. Some He calls to sacrifice themselves for others in the world. His favorite sons and daughters He leads to the pinnacle of perfection in the convent. But the vast majority are meant to sanctify themselves in the state of marriage. Of this latter state I have a double knowledge, which came to me partly by

experience and partly by observation. Let me tell you this is a difficult vocation, and the object of God's daily solicitude.

"Out West," continued Andy, in his quaint manner, seeing that both Genevieve and her husband were listening intently, "we have horses that will trot or pace, and others that will canter or run admirably, when driven alone. But if you were so rash as to hitch up two of them together, they'd kick your buggy into kindling-wood before they had traveled a mile. Some horses are fast and some are slow, some are heavy and others are light — and so not all men and women are suited for every station in life. Why? Because He who made no two blades of grass alike, has made them unlike, and destined them to fit into a particular place in His grand plan. By doing your duty in a spirit of faith, and keeping your hearts free from contamination of the world, you prepare yourselves for what God has in store for you.

"To form a good team the horses must be suited to their work and pull well together. It's much the same in married life. Not every man or woman who chance to meet will fit into God's plan harmoniously when united, though they be individually called to the married state. They must harmonize in tastes and in religion. Only such can form an ideal Christian home. In dissimilar temperaments, the opposite extremes of positive and negative forces are made to harmonize at the family hearth. On the one hand, where husband and wife are both decidedly positive, they will be apt to live too fast, or destroy the home in a pas-

sionate conflagration. On the other hand, where both are merely negative, the home is apt to be like some material dwellings in Tennessee, that admit both the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the just as well as the unjust within — dependent entirely on the providence of God. In the ideal home the husband should furnish the brain and the brawn, and be the support of the home, while the wife should keep the home neat and trim, with well-cooked food — and a heart not only warm enough to cheer her own, but to glow with sympathy for the poor and needy.

"I remember," said Andy, in a reminiscent tone, "how it was with myself. My dear wife, God rest her soul, had been a little hardened by the trials she had encountered, for she had been thrown on her own resources very early. We lived happily together for forty years, and I remember I often wished she would be more affectionate toward the little ones. She brought up her children in the fear of the Lord — and she kept a strap behind the door to inculcate the Lesson of the Ten Commandments. Well, thank God, two of our daughters, who never dared show her their love, or give her their confidence, are now serving God as Little Sisters of the Poor.

"Yes, even though the husband is a good provider and the wife a model mistress, the spirit of sacrifice and mutual forbearance are necessary. Both husband and wife must take the same general view of things. So that their actual sacrifices in later days may not be too burdensome they should agree in the beginning where and how they shall live. And they ought

to be fitted besides to move on the same social plane and have the same social inclinations.

"The first relationship we contract on entering life is that of religion. In time of prosperity some may be tempted to relegate God to the second place or even to forget Him — but all must return to Him when life is over. And what will an undutiful child of God say when it finds that it has sold its own soul and the souls of its children by an unchristian and unhallowed union? I once read of a husband who harnessed his wife to the plow when one of his horses died — and that has always reminded me of the real burden the Catholic party assumes when entering on a mixed marriage."

"Margaret would never do that," said Genevieve, confidently; "no matter how much she was attached to any one."

"How few in her circumstances would have hesitated," remarked Andy. "Many have succumbed to lesser temptations. And if she had not spurned Mr. Van Deever and all he had to offer until she could bring the influence of her religion to bear on him would she have the happiness that is hers to-day? Could she ever hope to exercise the influence over her husband that she now does? Why, it was that lofty, spiritual nature which attracted him, bound him, and will hold him a willing captive as long as he lives. And I predict," he added, after a moment's reflection, "that the same influence will yet be felt by the father, who at present is vainly trying to forget that he ever had a son."

CHAPTER XXIV

A TEXAS HOME

INSTEAD of spending their honeymoon entirely among the pleasant surroundings of the St. Lawrence, the Van Deevers came upon a transatlantic vessel at Montreal, and so decided to take a trip to Europe. It was late in September when they finally returned to the States. On their way to the Southwest they visited St. Mary's-on-the-Raisin, and were grieved to learn that the saintly Mother Lionella had passed away, and that the Texas foundation would not be undertaken by her successor. Desirous of showing their appreciation of all that the good Sisters had done for Margaret, Mr. and Mrs. Van Deever devoted the money which Webster considered due to the Redmonds, to the erection of Lionella Hall. This palatial building, devoted to music, with its hundred rooms for private practice, was erected in connection with the new college building.

After spending some time with their friends in Chicago, the Van Deevers proceeded on their journey to their distant Texas home, by way of St. Louis, New Orleans, and Galveston. About the middle of November, when Andy, who had gone on some time previously, assured his master that all the improvements had been completed, they finally arrived in

Bohia, where they received a cordial welcome from the citizens.

As on the occasion of the Right Reverend Bishop's visit, the whole population of the town and surrounding country was assembled at the depot when the train arrived. A neighboring band had been engaged, and as the train came to a stop, a delegation of ladies and gentlemen stepped forward to welcome Mr. and Mrs. Van Deever, and escorted them to the large touring car in which Andy and Padre Marino accompanied them to their home. An escort of Mexicans in gala attire preceded the machine, several neighbors followed in their own automobiles, while a promiscuous crowd brought up the rear of the procession.

At the Van Deever home a banquet was served on the spacious veranda for the guests of honor, while an elaborate fête was given the Mexicans on the extensive lawns. Even at a late hour that night, the merry laughter of the guests, the music of the band, and the fireworks, would have given a visitor from the North the impression of an ideal Fourth of July celebration.

"I have provided copies of your spiritual ancestors for every room," remarked Webster to Margaret the next morning, as they proceeded to view the house together.

"In remembrance of your first blunder?" laughed Margaret, and then she gave an exclamation of surprise. "Why, where did you get that oil painting of me?" she ejaculated, as she came upon full length

portraits of herself and her husband, hanging side by side.

"Oh, that is a little surprise which Genevieve enabled me to prepare for you," said Van Deever, in great delight. "And there is still another," he continued, as he conducted her to a private oratory which the Bishop had kindly procured for them at the suggestion of dear old Padre Marino.

"Oh, how lovely!" cried Margaret, kissing her husband, to emphasize her pleasure. When they had gone over the house together and stepped out on the veranda that faced a beautiful private park, Webster slipped his arm about his wife's waist, and said with emotion:

"I trust we may be very happy here, my dear Margaret."

"Please God!" said Margaret, gently, "and that we may be able to do some good to show that we appreciate His great bounty."

And then as they went down on the lawn she stopped in some surprise.

"What birds sing like that?" she asked. "I have never heard them before."

"Mocking-birds," said Webster, happy in answering her questions. "I'm sure they are almost as numerous in the South as the saucy sparrows in Chicago. A pleasant thing occurred here last spring while we were preparing for his Lordship's reception. The children of the confirmation class were rehearsing a hymn to Our Lady, which they were to sing during

the services. As repairs were in progress at the church, Padre Marino brought them over here to rehearse on the veranda where he could accompany them on the piano. I happened to be near one day when they began their rehearsal. While I was listening, standing in the shade of the cedars, I noticed a mocking-bird perching on that dwarfed banana-tree. With its little head tilted gently on one side, the bird listened intently until the children had repeated a stanza of the hymn three times. It had then evidently caught the air, and without waiting for an invitation, it sang the notes with wonderful accuracy, adding variations of its own that made the children stare. It finally concluded with a neat bow, as if to say 'Beat that, if you can!'"

"How wonderful!" said Margaret. "I wish I could send Genevieve one of those little songsters. She would be so glad to get it."

"You could send her a carload of them," returned her husband. "But they say if you want a mocking-bird to sing in captivity you must take it when it is very young, before it has tasted the delights of freedom."

"Everything is so big, so open," said Margaret, unable to keep the pleasure which she felt from her face and voice. "I am sure you couldn't have chosen a more delightful spot for a home."

"You'll like it in the spring when the magnolias are in bloom, and the air is scented with the fragrance of countless flowers and roses. Do you see that big bush back of the catalpa trees? It is a cluster of an-

cient roses, with branches as thick as my arm, that ramify until they terminate in thousands of buds. The cluster is over a hundred feet long, and more than thirty feet high. When it bloomed last spring it resembled an immense bower, literally covered from end to end with bright, sweet-smelling blossoms. . . . I hope you won't feel lonesome in this big house," he added, as they turned to retrace their steps.

"Do not fear," laughed Margaret. "I should feel at home with you anywhere," she added affectionately. "Besides," she continued, "I shall have much to do. I mean to interest myself personally in the servants, and hope to make and keep them all good, practical Catholics."

"Oh!" said her husband, "and what do you intend to do?"

"The best I can," said his wife. "Masters are responsible to a great extent for the conduct of those under them. I intend to help our people lead better lives and see that they understand and practice their religion."

"You will have some trouble, Margaret," said her husband, thoughtfully, "though I haven't any doubt but that you will succeed."

Margaret had learned by this time that the Mexicans were quite mistrustful of the white population, whom they call "Americans," and regard as foreigners. She had resolved that in settling among them she would leave nothing undone to win their hearts. She manifested the interest she felt on every occasion, and yet, for a long time, she could not break through their

reserve. They had not found it so difficult with her husband. He had settled there while still a non-Catholic, had rebuilt their church for them, and joined them freely in their prayers and devotions. They felt, in one way, as if he had identified himself with them, and they honored him as if he were a sort of prince. Though they gave Margaret a little of the honor that they lavished upon Webster Van Deever, they treated her with more aloofness. She was a Catholic, and so roused no particular attention by the practice of her religion. Then, her position as mistress of the house brought her into close contact with the Mexican servants, and these had never been restrained or questioned in any way by Webster.

So she was forced to choose her position at the outset. She must allow matters to drift as they had been doing under the bachelor régime of an easy-going master, or do her duty as the mistress of her husband's home and a conscientious Catholic matron with the souls of others under her immediate care. There could be but one choice for Margaret.

Mrs. Rana, the housekeeper, especially, rebelled against Margaret's management of domestic affairs. Mexicans in Texas are, as a rule, ignorant, careless, and superstitious. Mrs. Rana had had entire charge, and was jealous of her authority. She resented Margaret's appearance, and sought for a pretext to turn the other servants against her. Margaret's first expressed wish was that, as all were Catholics, they should make a practice of family devotions, and insisted that the servants be present. Then she said that

she would instruct the children of the ranch in catechism for an hour every day. Presently she began to visit the older folks at their homes. But her sweetness and kindness could not avail against the bitter spirit that was working against her under the surface, and which she felt, yet could not fathom. Fortunately, at this really critical time, a few incidents occurred which opened their eyes.

Mrs. Rana and another woman who had done much to create antagonism against their mistress, were taken suddenly and dangerously ill. Day after day Margaret visited them, and saw that they had the best of care — nor did she hesitate to follow up her cheering, kindly words with gentle ministrations, and even prepared dainties to tempt their appetites when once they had begun to mend. They could not be ungrateful. They saw Margaret in a new light, and they could not do enough for her nor say enough in her praise. By the end of the Christmas holidays she had indeed won the hearts of all. They spoke of her affectionately and lovingly as "The Lady." They carried their respect and reverence so far that a rancher, one day happening to use a profane expression in her presence, would then and there have received a severe beating from the other Mexicans, had not Webster Van Deever appeared just in time to save him, and to accept the humble apology he made to both of them.

Early the following year the Van Deevers began the construction of a boarding-school, and placed it under the management of the Sisters of Mercy, who came from Laredo. Margaret's sphere of influence had ex-

tended to the parish, and she assisted Padre Marino in the Sunday-school, visited and consoled the sick, and provided the material comforts of life for many poor Mexicans.

If she was thus supreme in her home and powerful in her parish, it was not to be wondered at that she made an impression on her neighbors. Before the Van Deevers arrived in Bohia, none of the whites or Americans of wealth and social standing were members of the Catholic Church. They identified the religion with the faults of the Mexicans, and usually referred to their place of worship as "the Greaser chapel."

In Margaret, however, the women were forced to recognize one who would be a social leader if she so desired, while few of the men were able to provide as luxurious a home as Webster, or could exert a greater influence in the financial world. Before a year had elapsed the mother of a family living in town confided the fact to Margaret that they ought to be Catholics, and begged her assistance in helping them to return to the Church. Soon after another family of prominence, who had become intimate with the Van Deevers, were led by them to see the truth, and to profess the faith.

And those, who were blind to, or prejudiced against the effects which their religion produced in this happy pair, could not help respecting them for their sterling qualities.

CHAPTER XXV

RECONCILIATION

FIVE happy, peaceful years passed over the Texas ranch and its inhabitants, with as much of the world's goods as they could possibly enjoy. It seems strange that it was Margaret who could yearn for more, and yet this was the fact.

One day, returning with their children from a ride, she remarked to her husband.

"Webster, why don't you drill for oil? We are not more than two hundred miles from Beaumont — and we're in what you call the oil belt."

"I'm perfectly content as I am," said her husband, "with you and the children. At the lowest estimate we are sure of an income of an hundred thousand dollars. Won't this keep the wolf from the door?"

"There is surely no danger of starvation," said Margaret, laughing, "but see all the good we could do in the cause of religion if our income were only ten times as large! Wealth is a sacred trust, and should be devoted to the service of God."

"And what would you do, dearest, with such a large income?" questioned her husband, indulgently.

"I haven't thought of any plan, so long as the possibility doesn't exist," she answered. "I would, however, very, very quietly, so that no one need ever find

it out, relieve the most urgent wants of religion first. We could begin by erecting and maintaining chapels in the thinly-settled districts, and support the priests that would look after the faithful. We could help our poor missionaries struggling among the pagans in foreign lands. We could establish parochial schools in the poorer parishes of the State, and guarantee a decent living for those dear Sisters who sacrifice their lives for Christ's little ones. We could endow an asylum for the orphans and a home for the aged. We could found an ideal home for consumptives and establish a few hospitals. In one word, with such an income, we could become the actual Church Extension in this State of limitless possibilities."

"My Dear Margaret!" exclaimed Webster Van Deever. "You certainly have ideas and perceptions! Let me see — I'll give you an indefinite option on the ranch to bore for oil and superintend the work free of charge, also furnish all the necessary capital. I can not guarantee the success of the undertaking. If God looks with favor on your plan He must direct you in locating the well."

"Do you really mean this, Webster?" asked Margaret, looking at him earnestly.

"I really do. Moreover, if we fail the loss will be mine, but if we discover oil in paying quantities you may dispose of the revenue in whatever way you see fit."

Margaret clapped her hands with delight.

"I accept your generous offer," she said. "And now let me suggest something to you — have you ever

noticed the marked resemblance between Greaser Hill, which we frequently pass on our rides over the ranch, and Spindle Top at Beaumont?"

"No," said her husband, surprised, "where in the world did you get that idea?"

Margaret colored a little — a charming habit which she had not yet been able to overcome.

"Why," she said, "I suppose it's only a strange fancy, but the fact is that since I've been forced to abandon several pet projects which I had in mind for want of funds, I've awakened repeatedly at night, imagining I saw the heavens illumined by a pillar of fire that arose from Greaser Hill and filled the air with volumes of smoke."

"That's strange," remarked her husband. "I wonder if there could be anything in that? At any rate there's no harm in trying to find out. As Greaser Hill is situated nearly in the center of the ranch I would prefer to drill there rather than in any other place. In case oil *is* discovered we shall be able to control the territory for miles around without fear of any interference. The consequences are almost too vast to estimate. Instead of fifty thousand dollars a year, you might have millions at your disposal for charitable purposes."

As a result of the discussion the Van Deevers went at once to Greaser Hill and examined it from all sides. When there was no longer any doubt in Webster's mind that Margaret was right in seeing a marked resemblance between the two places, he resolved to proceed to Beaumont the following day, buy the necessary

machinery, and secure the services of a competent man to take charge.

As soon as the derrick could be erected and the machinery installed, the work was begun, ostensibly for the purpose of boring a well. For two whole months the drilling continued, both night and day, without result or mishap. At the various stages of descent it was noticed, with no little satisfaction, that the successive strata of clay, gravel, and stone here resembled those encountered at the corresponding depths at Spindle Top. Finally, at a depth of eighteen hundred feet, the drill struck the blue flint which is both the hope and the dread of experts. They hail its presence as the stratum that immediately covers the oil, and they dread it as the cause of frequent accidents and the ruin of the hardest diamond drill.

At this stage the machinery was thoroughly overhauled before being again set in motion. The fireman then redoubled his exertions to keep up a high pressure of steam. Puff, puff, began the engine. The drill rose with an audible sigh and then fell back with a hopeless thud, that shook the derrick hundreds of feet above. The feeling of suspense and expectation increased with every fall of the drill — nevertheless the work dragged on without results for three more days and nights.

Early on the morning of December the third, Margaret rose to look after her little twin daughters, who slept together in a crib in another part of her own room. As she passed the window she paused a moment, with a prayer on her lips, and cast an anxious

glance in the direction of Greaser Hill. Suddenly the very earth seemed to quake beneath her feet, and after two or three seconds a terrific explosion rent the air, followed by the eruption which Margaret had seemed to see so often in a vision. For a second she stood rubbing her eyes, thinking she was mistaken. Then she ran to her husband's side and shook him violently.

"Webster! Webster! Wake up! Here is the pillar of fire in all reality!"

The noise that followed the explosion, like the sizzling, puffing, and belching of a thousand powerful locomotives, aroused and startled the inhabitants of the thinly-settled country along the San Antonio River. Within a short time cowboys on their ponies were hastening from all sides in the direction of Greaser Hill. Near the boundary of the ranch they met the panic-stricken Mexicans who had been engaged in boring the well. Their swarthy cheeks were ashen pale and their long black hair seemed almost to stand on end as they pointed with trembling hands toward the new spouter that belched forth great volumes of oil and water — and even ejected large pieces of rock into the air, while a dense cloud of mist and spray settled on the horizon and obscured the rising sun.

"Hell has opened!" they shrieked as they ran on, some in the direction of the Van Deever home, others to take refuge in the church.

Before the flow of oil could be controlled the news of the wonderful discovery had been sent broadcast all over the land.

"Oil found on the Van Deever ranch! Greaser Hill a second Spindle Top! Young Texan multi-millionaire!" began the dispatch from Bohia. "Mr. Van Deever, who left the Chicago Exchange some years ago, and settled, with his wife, on a fifty-thousand-acre ranch south of here, has sunk a well that spouts a hundred thousand barrels of oil a day. As the well is located in the center of his extensive property, his prospects are almost limitless."

On the day following the appearance of the dispatch in the New York papers, Webster Van Deever received a telegram that startled him:

"Congratulations! Have been looking for you for the past six years. Knew you would make your mark. Will welcome you with open arms when you come to New York.

"HOMER VAN DEEVER."

The young man did not tell Margaret of this telegram. Instead, he wrote a lengthy epistle to the older man, in which he informed him that oil had indeed been discovered on his ranch, but that another person held the option on all the land, and was the owner of the remarkable well described. After depicting the prospects in brightest colors, he told him that this person was the former Margaret Redmond, who was now his dearly-loved wife, and whom he had married a year after parting with his father.

He concluded his letter with the information that

as he was a full-fledged Catholic, and hoped to live and die as such, he feared he might not receive a cordial welcome in the East, and therefore preferred for the present to bask in the sunshine of Texas.

The return mail brought a pathetic letter from Webster's mother, the outpouring of a sorrowing and loving heart, mingled with expressions of the tenderest regard for her son and her new daughter. She expressed her delight that Webster had found peace in the Catholic Church, and said that she had been hesitating long over the same step, but that the joyous news his letter conveyed would certainly prompt her to take instruction in the immediate future. Her husband, she wrote, was broken in spirit, and had grown very old within the last few years. He was more than anxious to have the past forgotten, and welcome them both. She concluded her letter with an ardent appeal to her children to cheer the old home by their presence during the Christmas holidays.

This letter touched Webster to the heart, while Margaret wept over it compassionately. Even Andy wiped a tear from his withered cheek when he heard the good news.

"Thank God!" he said, with a touch of his old fervor. "Mr. Van Deever himself will die a Catholic yet."

There was no hesitation upon Margaret's part about getting ready for the journey. Her gentle soul yearned to have her husband and his people reconciled and happy, and the pleasure which she knew they

would feel in seeing Webster's children more than compensated for the trouble it would be to travel so far with them.

"I'm sure the well can be safely guarded during our absence," said Webster, thoughtfully; "and I will be glad to give the old folks the happiness they desire. I have reason to think that the Mexicans of the country, especially those employed on the ranch, are entirely devoted to our interests. If Padre Marino would help us out by coming over here to live, and just keep an eye on the place, we could remain away indefinitely."

Meanwhile, the oil from the Van Deever well was examined by experts and pronounced to be of a superior quality. Agents and speculators began to swarm into the country, several of whom made tempting offers — either of buying the property, developing it in shares, or incorporating and monopolizing the oil industry in that part of the State. To all these the Van Deevers gave an evasive answer, by declaring that they would take no definite steps in the matter until they had returned from New York.

EPILOGUE

BEFORE the close of the year 1908 my missionary labors brought me into the Missouri lowlands. My last mission there was preached in the parish of an energetic little priest, whom the people of the locality called " Our Saint," and who was usually spoken of as " The Swamp Angel," by his brother priests. In the incredibly short time of four years he had built up four flourishing missions at a great personal sacrifice. I shared his apostolic labors with pleasure, and reaped abundantly of what he had so laboriously sown in sorrow, and fertilized no less by the sweat of his brow than by his humble prayers.

When the consoling work was finally done, I boarded an Iron Mountain train at a little town in the Ozarks to return home for a few weeks of needed rest. As the train sped onward toward St. Louis, I took out my breviary to finish my Office before the shades of the long December evening had deepened into night.

Perhaps a half hour had thus elapsed when I was interrupted by a gentleman who had seated himself before me a short while previously. I glanced up at him several times, noting that his face seemed familiar, but not caring to speak because I could not place him.

"Don't you think, if you try, you could recollect me, Father?" he said at last, good-humoredly.

I closed my book with an answering smile.

"I have been trying, sir, but while I am positive that we've met before, I can't exactly recollect how or where. A poor missionary travels so constantly and meets so many that you'll forgive him, I'm sure."

"Well, then, perhaps you'll recall the circumstances. A certain young man addressed a certain Catholic priest on a Northern Pacific train about seven years ago and made open confession of his agnosticism and his grievances. The chief of the latter being a certain Catholic young lady, who had emphatically resented the young man's familiarity. You may remember, Father, that the young man asserted he would kiss that young lady even if he had to marry her?"

I laughed and held out my hand.

"Webster Van Deever!" I exclaimed, and he shook my hands with such delight that I almost knew the good news he had to tell before he uttered it.

"Well, Father, I've kissed her!" he said, triumphantly.

"I congratulate you with all my heart," I answered. I could not help but notice the wonderful transformation through which he seemed to have passed.

"I want you to meet my wife, Margaret Redmond Van Deever, Father," he continued. "As I went through to the dining-car a few minutes ago to get something for the babies, I recognized you, and told her I would bring you back to her."

"Babies?" I exclaimed.

"Come and see," laughed Van Deever.

After picking our way through several coaches, my guide rapped on the door of a drawing-room.

"Come in!" said a pleasant voice, and we entered.

"Allow me to introduce my wife, Father," said Webster Van Deever, with pardonable pride. "The Margaret Redmond you used to know at St. Mary's-on-the-Raisin."

"What a pleasure to meet you again and so unexpectedly, too!" said Margaret, holding out her hand.

"The pleasure is doubly mine," I answered, "for I've prayed for you two every day at holy Mass for years." And then I saw the beautiful faces of the little ones. "Why, you have a kindergarten!" I exclaimed.

Margaret and her husband laughed joyously.

"Come, Philip," she said, coaxing one of them to come to me. "This is Philip Webster — he's the oldest," she said. "Isn't he a big man? And those are the twins — Margaret and Genevieve — who are sleeping in the nurses' arms. Webster insisted on naming them after their mother and my old friend Genevieve Harty. Do you remember Genevieve, Father?"

"She was always as happy as a sunbeam — I would not like to forget her," I answered.

"And this is Joseph Homer," she added, fondling a baby of five or six months, who was lying on her lap. "He is named after his father and grandfather."

"Now you must be our guest for the rest of the way, and take supper with us," pleaded Webster Van Deever.

"If I may be favored with the development of your little romance from the time we parted in St. Paul to the present hour," I replied, "I will gladly accept your invitation."

"Agreed!" they both exclaimed, well-pleased with my proposition, and so the narrative began. My interest rose as it progressed.

"It is really a fascinating story," I remarked, when it was concluded. "I feel confident it would prove both entertaining and instructive to our young people if it were published! Would you have any objection to seeing it in print?" I asked.

Margaret looked at her husband rather shyly.

"Not if you conceal our identity," she said.

"Identity or no identity!" he exclaimed. "Are we ashamed of our happiness, or of the sacrifices we have made for each other? As far as I am concerned I would gladly tell the whole world and every man in it that I have the sweetest wife on earth, and the best and brightest babies, too. Why, we've already planned their future, Father," he went on, proudly. "We are going to make a missionary of Philip, though he says he'll be either a bishop or a mule-driver. Margaret and Genevieve are to be Sisters just like Mother Lionella. When they are professed we will build each a convent so that they may train good mothers for the world. My little Joseph Homer will have to settle down near us, and keep up the Van Deever name."

I joined in the merry laughter of the happy pair who were thus disposing of their children's future, and was about to add that I hoped God's plan would correspond with theirs, when we were disturbed by a rap on the door. The next moment a pleasant-looking, elderly man, with snow-white locks, opened the door and announced supper.

Webster Van Deever pointed to me.

"Come in, Andy, and shake hands with the priest to whom I made my first confession on my return from the coast some years ago."

Andy came in promptly, scrutinizing me the while.

"I've been praying for your Reverence all these years," he said, as he knelt and asked my blessing.

"And why?" I asked, smiling.

"Why, I was afraid you foretold bad luck to my master when you said you couldn't congratulate him on his prospects," said Andy. "But I see now there is some mistake."

Van Deever laughed.

"Your master has been thoroughly converted since then," I said. "So I can safely congratulate him and you on your future prospects and your present happiness. And now, I suppose," I continued, "that you consider Mr. Van Deever the one exception in ten thousand?"

"Maybe so," replied Andy, cautiously, "but he wasn't born that way. He was honest, and had a good will in spite of his heathen education. I may be right or I may be wrong," he added, "but it's my honest opinion, Father, that if all Catholic young men

and young women were as true children of God as Mrs. Van Deever has proven herself to be, and followed her example in affairs of the heart, mixed marriages would be unknown, the world would become a garden of Eden, and all mankind would reap abundantly of the blessings of heaven."

THE END

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